



THE DOCTRINES  
OF THE  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
IN AMERICA

AS CONTAINED IN THE DISCIPLINES OF SAID CHURCH  
FROM 1788 TO 1808, AND SO DESIGNATED  
ON THEIR TITLE-PAGES

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COMPILED AND EDITED  
WITH AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

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IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.

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TO ROBERT T. MILLER

A FRIEND INDEED

WHOSE CONSTANT AND GENEROUS KINDNESSES HAVE  
MATERIALLY AIDED MY RESEARCHES IN METH-  
ODIST HISTORY, THESE TWO VOLUMES ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATE-  
FULLY INSCRIBED



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## INTRODUCTION.

**H**OW many Methodists, reading the standing formula, "Doctrines and Discipline," on the title-page of the successive editions of that marvelous little book we call the Discipline, have known exactly what is comprehended under the term "Doctrines"? Perhaps even ministers have sometimes contented themselves with the supposition that it referred only to the Twenty-five Articles of Religion, which, as is well known, Mr. Wesley abridged from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. But the little book has had a long history, dating in America from 1784; and, fortunately, when we carefully trace all the stages of its historical evolution as it has steadily gone on to perfection, it is not difficult to determine with certainty and precision what documents are included under the designation, "Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."



Between 1788 and 1808, both in the series of Annual Disciplines issued before the General Conference was organized in 1792, and in the series of Quadrennial Disciplines which appeared from 1792 to 1808, there were inserted various Doctrinal Tracts and Sections, the complete list of which, with the dates of the Disciplines which contain them, is as follows:

- I. "The Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation," which was inserted in 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1797, 1801, 1804, 1805, and 1808.
- II. "Serious Thoughts on the Infallible, Unconditional Perseverance of all that have once experienced Faith in Christ," which was inserted in 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1797, 1801, 1804, 1805, and 1808.
- III. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1765," which was inserted in 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1797, 1801, 1804, 1805, and 1808.

IV. "An Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism," which was inserted in 1790, 1791, and 1792.

V. "Of Christian Perfection," which was inserted in 1792, 1797, 1798, 1801, 1804, 1805, and 1808.

VI. "Against Antinomianism," which was inserted in 1792, 1797, 1798, 1801, 1804, 1805, and 1808.

Having accurately traced the number and character of these inserted Doctrinal Tracts and Sections, with the editions of the Discipline which contained them, let us now notice the parallel evolution of the title-page of the Discipline; for that, like the book itself, has a clearly traceable and significant history, as, in successive editions, it was accommodated to the altered contents of the book.\* In 1788, when Tracts I and II were first inserted, the phrase, "With some other useful pieces annexed," appears on the title-page, the main title continuing the same as in 1787—namely, "A Form of

\* For a complete descriptive and critical catalogue of the editions of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America from 1784 to 1808, see my article in the *Methodist Review* (New York) for May-June, 1902.

Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America," etc. In 1789 the doctrinal contents, though increased by the addition of Mr. Wesley's "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," are still indicated by the same phrase employed in 1788; but in 1790, when the "Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism" was added, and all four of the Doctrinal Tracts, together with the Articles of Religion, are incorporated as Sections of the Discipline itself, the title becomes, "A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members (now comprehending the Principles and Doctrines) of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America," etc. In 1791 these same four Doctrinal Sections, and the Articles of Religion, again enjoy the unique distinction, among all the doctrinal publications of Methodism, in Europe and America, of being formally and officially designated, on the very title-page of the law-book of the Church, the "Principles and Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." In 1792, when the General Conference was organized, and when all six of the Doctrinal Tracts and Sections whose titles are enumerated above

were included in the Discipline for the first time, the evolution of the title-page into the standard and permanent form was completed; and the title, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America," together with "revised and approved at the General Conference," meets us for the first time.

Thus there is not the smallest doubt attached to the solidly—nay, perfectly—based historical conclusion that the term "Doctrines," when it appeared on the title-page of the Discipline, and afterwards, designated, together with the Articles of Religion, the above-enumerated Doctrinal Tracts and Sections, which accordingly must be recognized as enjoying the solitary distinction of publication in the Discipline, with official designation on the title-page thereof as the "Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."

After 1792 the "Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism" does not appear in any edition of the Discipline. In 1798, Tracts I, II, and III were omitted from the edition containing the "Notes" of Coke and Asbury, lest the book should become too bulky; but they were all restored in the edition of 1801,

and continued in the editions of 1804, 1805, and 1808. The General Conference of 1812 ordered, on motion of Jesse Lee, "that the tracts on doctrine be left out of the future edition of our form of Discipline," and that certain tracts, which are named, "be printed and bound in a separate volume."\* Accordingly the Tracts disappear from the Discipline of 1812—which is also reduced from the primitive 16mo to the well-known 24mo form—and have never since been inserted; though the original title of 1792, "Doctrines and Discipline," has continued on the title-page of all editions of the Discipline, in both Episcopal Methodisms, to this day. The history of the title-page, and of the book itself, leaves no room to doubt its exact meaning.

I have before me the volume of tracts which announces itself in an "Advertisement," or preface, as published by order of the General Conference of 1812. The "Advertisement" bears date "July 5, 1832": apparently twenty years elapsed before the book agents obeyed the mandate of the General Conference. The tracts, which are thirteen in number, do not include all

\* General Conference Journals, Vol. I, p. 121.

of the six mentioned by title in Jesse Lee's resolution and include but two of those which had formerly appeared in the Discipline—namely, “ Serious Thought on the Infallible, Unconditional Perseverance,” etc., and Mr. Wesley's “ Plain Account of Christian Perfection.” The volume itself is entitled “ A Collection of Interesting Tracts Explaining Several Important Points of Scripture Doctrine.” Thus it appears that either long familiarity with the doctrinal contents of the Discipline had made the General Conference of 1812 somewhat unmindful of the special character which the tracts acquired through their incorporation in the Discipline itself; or in the twenty years from 1812 to 1832, the Disciplinary thread which bound together the tracts was lost.\*

\* The language of the “ advertisement ” plainly implies that the Book Agents of 1832 believed they were (1) obeying the mandate of the General Conference of 1812, and (2) publishing all the doctrinal tracts which had previously been included in the Discipline though they did neither. They say: “ Several of the following Tracts were formerly published in the form of Discipline; but as this undergoes a revision once in four years, the General Conference of 1812 ordered these Tracts to be left out of the Discipline; and, that they might still be within the reach of every reader, directed them to be published in a separate volume. They have been accordingly prepared and published in this form, in a stereotyped edition.”

It has seemed to me to be of real and distinct importance and use that a work should be carefully edited and published, with a suitable historical and explanatory introduction, containing all the Doctrinal Tracts and Sections that have at any time formed a part of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America—and nothing else. These views of mine were communicated to Dr. H. C. Jennings, the Senior Agent of the Western Methodist Book Concern, through my valued friend, Mr. R. T. Miller, a member of the Book Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and the result is these two volumes of the series of “Little Books on Doctrine,” which I have carefully conformed to the original Tracts contained in the Disciplines, the printing being done directly from the books themselves, and following, in all important particulars, the primitive typography. In this manner I have sought to place within reach of all Methodists, for the first time since the publication of the Discipline of 1808, the “Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America,” as incorporated in the various early editions of the Discipline, and so designated on the title-pages thereof.

Up to this point in this Introduction, I have striven to put in a clear and convincing way what is historically certain about these Tracts. If this were all, the publication as here carried out would be amply justified. But there is a moot question in American Methodism concerning the “present existing and established standards of doctrine”; so described by the General Conference of 1808 in the first “Restrictive Rule” designed to define and limit the powers of the Delegated General Conference. To a brief historical consideration of this question, the remainder of this Introduction must be devoted.

In the Minutes of the American yearly Conference of 1781, the first question is as follows: “What preachers are now determined, after mature consideration, close observation, and earnest prayer, to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline, as contained in the Notes, Sermons, and Minutes published by Mr. Wesley, so far as they respect both preachers and people, according to the knowledge we have of them, and the ability God shall give?” The same standards are nominated in the chapel deeds which were directed



to be drawn by the action of the American Conference in 1780. In the Minutes of 1784, taken at the last Conference held before the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church by the Christmas Conference in December of that year, occurs the following action with regard to European preachers: "If they are recommended by Mr. Wesley, will be subject to the American Conference, preach the doctrine taught in the four volumes of Sermons, and Notes on the New Testament, keep the circuits they are appointed to, follow the direction of the London and American Minutes, and be subject to Francis Asbury as General Assistant, while he stands approved by Mr. Wesley and the Conference, we will receive them," etc. This action embodies precisely the points indicated by Mr. Wesley's letter of instructions to the Conference, received by Mr. Asbury on Christmas Eve, 1783, exactly one year before the assembling of the Christmas Conference.

Concerning the Articles of Religion—Twenty-four of which appear in the first Discipline of 1784, and the whole Twenty-five in the second Discipline of 1786—as authorized standards of doctrine there is no dispute

But the alternative seems to lie between Mr. Wesley's first fifty-two or fifty-three Sermons, as published in the original four-volume edition, and his Notes on the New Testament, together with such weight as must be conceded to the Doctrinal Minutes of the British Conference, on the one hand; and the above-enumerated Doctrinal Tracts and Sections, actually inserted in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church by competent authority, on the other. For the Notes, Sermons, (and Minutes), may be urged all the English precedents, and the American Conference action of 1780, 1781, and 1784 before the organization of the Church. For the Doctrinal Tracts and Sections may be urged the Disciplines, with their title-pages, from 1788 to 1808, containing and expressly announcing the Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church. If there is any express and decisive evidence *ad rem*, enabling us to choose with certainty and finality between these two views, which appear to be the only *definite* ones we have historical warrant for entertaining, I have not been able to find it. My judgment rather inclines to the belief that the fathers of 1808,—if they did not actually overlook the action

## INTRODUCTION.

of the Yearly Conferences before the organization of the Church, a quarter of a century before, or regard it as superseded by the action of the Christmas Conference in receiving the Articles of Religion framed by Mr. Wesley,—probably had their minds upon the actual doctrinal contents of the Disciplines in their hands, designated on the title-page as the “Doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” and familiar to the whole Church for nearly a quarter of a century. The Doctrinal Tracts and Sections, with the exception of the “Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism,” were continued, as has been indicated above, in the Discipline of 1808 in which the language concerning “our present existing and established standards of doctrine” first appeared.

JNO. J. TIGERT.

NASHVILLE, TENN., 21 *April*, 1902.

THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
PREDESTINATION, ELECTION,  
AND  
REPROBATION.



T H E  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
O F  
PREDESTINATION, ELECTION,  
A N D  
R E P R O B A T I O N .

---

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*ELIZABETH TOWN:*  
Printed by SHEPARD KOLLOCK.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.



# THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE, &c.

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1. **T**HE scripture saith, † God *hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.* And St. Peter calls the saints, ‡ *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience.* And St. Paul saith unto them, || *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth; whereupon he hath called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. From all these places of scripture it is plain that God had chosen some to life and glory before, or from the foundation of the world. And the wisdom of all Christians is, to labour that their judgments may be informed herein, according to the scripture. And to that

† Ephes. i. 4.      ‡ 1 Pet. i. 2.      || 2 Thess. ii. 13, 24.



end let us consider the manner of God's speaking to the sons of men.

3. God saith to *Abraham*, Rom. iv. 17. *As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead and calleth things that are not as though they were.* Observe, God speaks then, at that present time, to *Abraham* saying, *I have made thee a father of many nations*, notwithstanding *Abraham* was not at that time the father of one child, but *Ishmael*. How then must we understand *I have made thee a father of many nations*?

4. The apostle tells us plainly, it was so, *Before God who calleth things that are not as though they were.* And so he calleth *Abraham the father of many nations*, though he was not as yet the father even of *Isaac*, in whom his seed was to be called.

5. God useth the same manner of speaking, when he calleth Christ, † *The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; although indeed he was not slain for some thousand years after. Hence therefore we may easily understand what he speaketh of *electing us from the foundation of the world.*

6. God calleth *Abraham a father of many nations*, though not so at that time. He calleth *Christ, The Lamb*

† Revel. xiii. 8.

*slain from the foundation of the world*, though not slain till he was a man in the flesh. Even so he calleth men *Elected from the foundation of the world*, though not elected till they were men in the flesh. Yet it is all so before God, who knowing all things from eternity, *calleth things that are not as though they were*.

7. By all which it is clear, that as Christ was called *The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, and yet not slain till some thousand years after, till the day of his death; so also men are called *elect from the foundation of the world*, and yet are not elected perhaps till some thousand years after, till the day of their conversion to God.

8. And indeed this is plain, without going farther, from those very words of St. Peter, *elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience*. For,

If the elect are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, then they were not chosen before they were sanctified by the Spirit. But they were not sanctified by the Spirit, before they had a being. It is plain then neither were they chosen from the foundation of the world. But God *calleth things that are not, as though they were*.

9. This is also plain from those words of St. Paul, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation*,

*through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.*

Now,

If the saints are chosen to salvation, through believing of the truth, and were called to believe that truth by the hearing of the gospel, then they were not chosen before they believed the truth, and before they heard the gospel, whereby they were called to believe. But they were chosen through belief of the truth, and called to believe it by the gospel. Therefore they were not chosen before they believed; much less before they had a being, any more than Christ was slain before he had a being. So plain is it, that they were not elected, till they believed; although God *calleth things that are not, as though they were.*

\* 10. Again, how plain is it, where St. Paul saith, that they whom † God *did predestinate, according to the council of his own will, to be to the praise of his glory,* were such as did *first trust in Christ*? And in the very next verse, he saith that they *trusted in Christ after they heard the word of truth* (not before.) But they did not hear the word before they were born. Therefore it is plain, the act of election is *in time*, though known of God before; who, according to his knowledge, often speaketh of the things *which are not, as though they*

† Ephes. i. 11, 12.

were. And thus is the great-stumbling block about election taken away, that men may *make their calling and election sure*.

11. The scripture tells us as plainly what predestination is : it is, God's fore-appointing obedient believers to salvation, not without, but *according to his fore-knowledge* of all their works, *from the foundation of the world*. And so likewise he predestinates or fore-appoints all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but *according to his fore-knowledge* of all their works, *from the foundation of the world*.

12. We may consider this a little farther. God, from the foundation of the world, fore-knew all men's believing or not believing. And according to this his fore-knowledge, he chose or elected all obedient believers, as such, to salvation, and refused or *reprobated* all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation. Thus the scriptures teach us to consider *election* and *reprobation*, *according to the fore-knowledge of God from the foundation of the world*.

13. But here some may object, that I hold our faith and obedience to be the cause of God's electing us to glory.

I answer, I do hold, that faith in Christ producing obedience to him is *a cause without which* God elected

none to glory ; for we never read of God's electing to glory, any who lived and died a disobedient unbeliever. But I do not hold, that it is the *cause for which* he elects any : the contrary of this is easily shewn thus :

Suppose my obedience is a cause of my election to salvation, What is the cause of my obedience? *Ans.* My love to Christ.

But what is the cause of my love to Christ?

*Ans.* My faith in Christ.

But what is the cause of my faith in Christ?

*Ans.* The preaching of the gospel of Christ.

But what is the cause of the preaching of the gospel to us? *Ans.* Christ's dying for us.

But what is the cause of Christ's dying for us?

*Ans.* God's great love of pity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

14. Thus all men may see that I do not hold God chose any man to life and salvation for any good which he had done, or for any which was in him, before he put it there. And this I shall now shew more at large from the oracles of God.

1. God's great love of pity, wherewith he loved the sons of men, even while they were dead in trespasses and sins, was the cause of his sending his Son to die for them ; as appears from the following scriptures : † God

† John iii. 16.

*so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For † when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. And, God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

2. Christ's dying for our sins is the cause of the gospel's being preached to us, as appears from those scriptures, ‡ *Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations. ¶ Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

3. The gospel's being preached to sinners is the cause of their believing, as appears from those scriptures, § *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

4. Men's believing is the cause of their justification, as appears from those scriptures, \* *By him all that believe are justified from all things. || He is the justifier of all that believe in Jesus. Therefore we conclude that a man*

† Rom. v. 6, &c.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.

¶ Mark xvi. 15.

§ Rom. x. 15, &c.

\* Acts xiii, 39.

|| Rom. iii. 26, &c.

*is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. † Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.*

5. Our knowing ourselves justified by faith is the cause of our love to Christ, as appears from these scriptures, ‡ *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. || We love him because he first loved us.*

6. Our love to Christ is the cause of our obeying him, as appears from those scriptures, § *If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And, If any man love me, he will keep my words. †† For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*

7. Our obeying Christ is the cause of his giving us eternal life, as appears from those scriptures, †† *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. \* Blessed are they that do his*

† Rom. iv. 3, 23, &c.

‡ 1 John iv. 10.

|| 1 John iv. 19

§ John xiv. 15, 21, &c.

†† 1 John v. 3.

‡‡ Matt. vii, 2

\* Rev. xxii, 14.

*commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. And † Christ being made perfect through sufferings, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.*

15. This may be more briefly exprest thus :

1. God's love was the cause of his sending his Son to die for sinners.

2. Christ's dying for sinners is the cause of the gospel's being preached.

3. The preaching of the gospel is the cause (or means) of our believing.

4. Our believing is the cause (or condition) of our justification.

5. The knowing ourselves justified through his blood, is the cause of our love to Christ.

6. Our love to Christ is the cause of our obedience to him.

7. Our obedience to Christ is the cause of his becoming the author of eternal salvation to us.

16. These following things therefore ought well to be considered by all that fear God.

1. There was a necessity of God's love in sending his Son to die for us, without which he had not come to die.

† Heb. v. 9.



2. There was a necessity of Christ's love in dying for us, without which the gospel could not have been preached.

3. There was a necessity of the gospel's being preached, without which there could have been no believing.

4. There is a necessity of our believing the gospel, without which we cannot be justified.

5. There is a necessity of our being justified by faith in the blood of Christ, without which we cannot come to know that he *loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood*.

6. There is a necessity of our knowing his love, who first loved us, without which we cannot love him again.

7. There is a necessity of our loving him, without which we cannot keep his commandments.

8. There is a necessity of our keeping his commandments, without which we cannot enter into eternal life.

By all which we see, that there is as great a necessity of our keeping the commandments of God, as there was of God's sending his Son into the world, or of Christ's dying for our sins.

17. But for whose sins did Christ die? Did he die for *all* men, or but for *some*?

To this also I shall answer by the scriptures, shewing

1. The testimony of all the prophets. 2. Of the angel of God. 3. Of Christ himself. And, 4. Of his apostles.

*First, the prophet Isaiah saith thus † Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet did we esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.* Thus Isaiah sheweth plainly, that the iniquities of all those who went astray, were laid upon Christ. And to him the testimony of all the other prophets agreeth: \* *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* The same saith that great prophet, John the Baptist, who ‡ *came to bear witness of the light, that all men through it might believe.* And again, || *Behold, saith he, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* Thus have all the prophets, with one consent, testified that God *laid upon Christ the iniquities of all that were gone astray: that he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; that all men through*

† Isaiah liii. 4, 5, 6.

\* Acts x. 43.

‡ John i. 7.

|| *Ibid.*, verse 29.

*him may believe: and that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.*

*Secondly,* The angel of God testified the same thing, saying, § *Fear not; for I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,* which was, that there was *born unto them a Saviour, even Christ the Lord.* By this also it appears, that Christ died for all men. For else it could not have been glad tidings of great joy to all people; but rather sad tidings to all those for whom he died not.

*Thirdly,* We come now to the words of Christ himself, who knew his own business better than any man else; and therefore if his testimony agree with these, we must needs be convinced that they are true. Now he speaks thus, ‡ *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.* Thus we see the words of Christ agree with the words of the prophets; therefore it must needs be owned that Christ died for all.

§ Luke ii. 10.

‡ John iii. 14, &c.

*Fourthly*, And now we will hear what the apostles say concerning this thing. § *The love of Christ*, saith the Apostle Paul, *constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.* And to Timothy he saith, || *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* Again, he saith to Titus, † *The grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared.* And yet again to the Hebrews, \* *That he, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.* And to this agreeth St. John, witnessing, ¶ *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* And again, speaking of himself and the rest of the apostles, he saith, || *We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* Thus we have the testimony of all the prophets, of the angel of God, of Christ himself, and of his holy apostles, all agreeing together in one to prove, that Christ died for all mankind.

18. What then can they, who deny this, say? Why, they commonly say, *All men*, in these scriptures, does not

§ 2 Cor. v. 14, &c.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

† Tit. ii. 11.

\* Heb. ii. 9.

¶ 1 John ii. 2.

|| 1 John iv. 14.

mean *all men*, but only *the elect*; that *every man* here does not mean *every man*, but only every one of the elect; that *the world* does not mean *the whole world*, but only the world of believers; and that the *whole world*, in St. John's words, does not mean *the whole world*, but only the whole world of the elect.

19. To this shameless, senseless evasion, I answer thus:

If the scripture no where speaks of a world of believers or elect, then we have no ground, reason, pretence, or excuse for saying, Christ died only for a world of believers or elect. But the scripture no where speaks of such a world. Therefore we have no ground or pretence for speaking thus.

Nay, the scripture is so far from calling believers or elected persons, *the world*, that they are every where in scripture plainly and expressly distinguished from *the world*. † *If ye were of the world, saith Christ, the world would love its own; but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

20. But let the scripture itself speak, what world Christ died for. ‡ *When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were enemies, we were*

† John xv. 19.

‡ Rom. v. 6—10.

*reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* From all which we may clearly see, that Christ died for the world of the ungodly, for the world of sinners, for the world of his enemies; the just one for the world of the unjust. But the elect, as elect, are not unjust. Therefore he died not for the elect, as elect; but even for that world St. John speaks of, when he says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness.”

21. If it be said, “The elect were sinners once as well as others;” I answer, true; but not as they are elect in Christ, but as they were out of Christ, without hope and without God in the world. Therefore, to say that Christ died for the elect, as elect, is absolute nonsense and confusion.

22. To put this matter out of doubt, I would commend these following considerations to all sober-minded men.

1. The scripture saith, “Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

But the elect, as elect, were not lost.

Therefore Christ died not for the elect, as or because they were elect; for that had been to seek and save what was found and saved before.

2. The scripture saith, Christ died for the unjust.

But the elect, as such, are not unjust.

Therefore, Christ died not for the elect as elect ; for that had been to justify them who were just before.

3. The scripture saith, “He came to preach deliverance to the captives.”

But the elect, as elect, are not captives ; for Christ hath set them free.

Therefore he died not for the elect, as elect ; for that had been to set them at liberty who were at liberty before.

4. The scripture saith, “He quickened them who were dead in trespasses and sins, such as were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, without hope and without God in the world.”

But the elect, as such, are not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive unto God. Neither are they without Christ ; for they are chosen in him ; nor are they aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. But they are fellow-citizens with the saints, and the household of God.

Therefore Christ died not for the elect, as or because they were elect. For that had been to quicken them that were alive before, and to bring them into covenant, who were in covenant before. And thus, by these men’s account our Lord lost his labour of love, and accomplished A SOLEMN NOTHING.

23. Thus having shewn the grievous folly of those who say, that Christ died for none but the elect, I shall now prove by undeniable reasons, that he died for all mankind.

*Reas. 1.* Because all the prophets, the angel of God, Christ himself, and his holy apostles with one consent, affirm it.

*Reas. 2.* Because there is not one scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, that denies it, either negatively, by saying, that he did not die for all; or affirmatively, by saying, that he died but for some.

*Reas. 3.* Because he himself commanded, that the gospel should be preached to every creature.

*Reas. 4.* Because he calleth all men, every where, to repent.

*Reas. 5.* Because those who perish are damned for not believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Therefore, he must have died for them. Else they would be damned for not believing a lie.

*Reas. 6.* Because they which are damned might have been saved. For thus saith the word of God. † “They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they all may be damned.”

† 2 Thess. ii. 10.



*Reas. 7.* Because some deny the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. But they could not deny the Lord that bought them, if he had not bought them at all.

24. I shall now briefly shew the dreadful absurdities that follow from saying Christ died only for the elect.

1. Christ died not for all, then unbelief is no sin in them that finally perish ; seeing there is not any thing for those men to believe unto salvation, for whom Christ died not.

2. If Christ died not for all, then it would be a sin in the greatest part of mankind to believe he died for them ; seeing it would be to believe a lie.

3. If Christ died not for those that are damned, then they are not damned for unbelief. Otherwise, you say, that they are damned for not believing a lie.

4. If Christ died not for all, then those who obey Christ by going and preaching the gospel to every creature, as glad tidings of grace and peace, of great joy to all people, do sin thereby, in that they go to most people with a lie in their mouth.

5. If Christ died not for all men, then God is not in earnest in calling all men every where to repent : for what good could repentance do those, for whom Christ died not ?

6. If Christ died not for all, then why does he say he is not willing any should perish? Surely he is willing, yea, resolved that most men should perish; else he would have died for them also.

7. How shall God judge the world by the man Christ Jesus, if Christ did not die for the world? Or how shall he judge them according to the gospel, when there was never any gospel or mercy for them?

\* 25. But, say some, “If Christ died for all, why are not all saved?”

I answer, Because they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Because God called, and they refused to answer; he stretched out his hand, and they regarded not: he counselled them, but they would none of his counsels; he reproved them, but they set at nought all his reproofs; they followed after lying vanities, and forsook their own mercies; they denied the Lord that bought them, and so brought upon themselves swift destruction; and because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, therefore (if you would know wherefore) God gave them up to believe a lie, and to be damned. How often (saith our Lord) would I have gathered you together, and ye would not? Ye would not. Here is the plain reason, why all men are not saved. For God promiseth no man salvation,

whether he will or no ; but leaveth them to everlasting destruction, who will not believe and obey the gospel.

26. “O, then you are an Arminian ! You are a free-willer. You hold free-will in man !”

I hold nothing but what the scripture saith ; and that you shall give me leave to hold. I do not hold, that any man has any will or power of himself to do any thing that is good ; but by the grace of God we may do all things. I have already shewn, he hath given Christ for all men. And he who spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things ? And what man knoweth not that if he make use of all the will and power God hath given him, God will double his talent and give him more ? If any therefore desire to have more, let him faithfully improve what he has. Likewise what man is he, who doth not know that he is not condemned for not doing what he could not do, but for leaving undone what he could have done if he would. Let any man deny it if he can.

27. “What then, may all men be saved if they will ?”

Before I answer this question directly, I shall shew that those who ask it, are themselves compelled to grant as much freedom of will, as we desire to plead for.

For 1. The Assembly of Divines, in their Confession of Faith, c. 9. do expressly say, God “hath endowed the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity determined to do good or evil.” 2. Mr. Baxter, in the preface of his call to the unconverted, says “That Calvin as well as Arminius, held free-will, and that no man of brains denieth, that man hath a will that is naturally free; it is free from violence, it is a self-determining principle.” Sure here is as much said for free-will, as any man need to say, and perhaps more. For,

The difference between us, is this. They say, “Man hath a will which is naturally free.” We say, “Man hath this freedom of will, not naturally, but by grace.”

We believe, that in the moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left; but that God, when of his own free-grace he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation. And in all this, man’s boasting is excluded; the whole of that which is good in him, even from the first moment of his will, being of grace and not of nature. And now we come directly to the question, whether all men may be saved if they will?

28. To those who have considered what has been pre-

mised ; I answer, 1. What should hinder them, if they be willing? For 2. God is not willing that any should perish ; yea, 3. He is willing that all men should be saved. And Christ is willing ; for he “came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” And how did he weep over Jerusalem? How often would he have gathered them together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not? And now what hinders men’s salvation, but that same, *they would not.*

29. They would not ; they will not come at Christ’s call, and hearken to his reproof, and wait for his counsels, and receive power from on high to live to him who died for them, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless, and following him whithersoever he goeth. This way is so narrow that few care to walk therein ; and therefore they are not saved even because *they reject the counsel of God against themselves.* They chose death ; therefore they perish everlastingly.

SERIOUS THOUGHTS

ON THE

INFALLIBLE, UNCONDITIONAL  
PERSEVERANCE

OF ALL THAT HAVE

ONCE EXPERIENCED FAITH IN CHRIST.



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1. **M**ANY large volumes have been already published on this important subject. But the very length of them makes them hard to be understood, or even purchased by common readers. A short, plain treatise on this head, is what serious men have long desired, and what is here offered to those whom God has endowed with love and meekness of wisdom.

2. By the *Saints* I understand, those who are holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself: those who are endowed with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience: those who are grafted into the good olive-tree, the spiritual, invisible church: those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches:" those who so



effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world: those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit: those who live by faith in the Son of God: those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant; those to whom all, or any of these characters belong, I mean by the term *saints*.

3. Can any of these fall away? By *falling away* we mean, not barely falling into sin. This, it is granted, they may. But can they fall *totally*? Can any of these so fall from God, as to perish everlastingly?

4. I am sensible, either side of this question is attended with great difficulties; such as reason alone could never remove. Therefore to the law and to the testimony. Let the living oracles decide: and if these speak for us, we neither seek nor want further witness.

5. On this authority, I believe a saint may fall away; that one who is holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself, may nevertheless so fall from God, as to perish everlastingly.

I. For thus saith the Lord. † “When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

† Ezek. xviii. 24.

That this is to be understood of eternal death, appears from the 26th verse :

“When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, [here is temporal death] for his iniquity that he hath done, he shall die : [here is death eternal.]”

It appears further from the whole scope of the chapter, which is to prove, † “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

If you say, “the soul here means the body,” I answer, that will die whether you sin or no.

6. Again, thus saith the Lord, § “When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live, if he trust to his own righteousness, [yea, or to that promise as absolute and unconditional] and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for the iniquity that he hath committed shall he die.”

Again, || “When the righteous turneth from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.”

Therefore one who is holy and righteous in the judgment of God himself, may yet so fall as to perish everlastingly.

7. “But how is this consistent with what God de-

† ver. 4.

§ c.xxxiii. v. 13.

|| v. 18.

clared elsewhere? † “If his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments—I will visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips: I have sworn once by my holiness that I will not fail David.”

I answer, There is no manner of inconsistency between one declaration and the other. The prophet declares the just judgment of God, against every righteous man who falls from his righteousness. The psalmist declares ‡ “the old loving-kindnesses which God sware unto David in his truth. I have found, *saith he*, David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. My hand shall hold him fast, and my arm shall strengthen him—His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.” It follows, § “But if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments—Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break. I will not fail David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”

May not every man see, that the *covenant* here spoken of, relates wholly to David and his seed or children?

† Psalm lxxxix. v. 31—34. ‡ v. 48, 21, 22, 30. § ver. 31, &c.

Where then is the inconsistency between the most absolute promise made to a particular family, and that solemn account which God has here given of his way of dealing with mankind?

\* Besides, the very covenant mentioned in these words is not absolute, but conditional. The condition of repentance in case of forsaking God's law was implied, though not exprest. And so strongly implied, that this condition failing, not being performed, God did also *fail David*. He did *alter the thing that had gone out of his lips*, and yet without any impeachment of his truth. He || "abhorred and forsook his anointed," the seed of David, whose throne, if they had repented, should have been *as the days of heaven*. He did ¶ "break the covenant of his servant, and cast his crown to the ground." So vainly are these words of the Psalmist brought to contradict the plain, full testimony of the Prophet.

8. Nor is there any contradiction between this testimony of God by Ezekiel, and those words which he spake by Jeremiah: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." For do these words assert, that no righteous man ever turns from his righteousness? No such thing. They do not touch the question, but simply declare God's love

to the Jewish church. To see this in the clearest light, you need only read over the whole sentence. † “At the same time, saith the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the Lord, the people which were left of the sword, found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I caused him to rest.” “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, *saith the Prophet, speaking in the person of Israel*, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel.”

\* Suffer me here to observe once for all, a fallacy which is constantly used by almost all writers on this point. They perpetually beg the question by applying to particular persons, assertions, or prophecies, which relate only to the church in general: and some of them only to the Jewish church and nation, as distinguished from all other people.

If you say, “But it was particularly revealed to *me*, that God had loved *me* with an everlasting love:” I answer, Suppose it was, (which might bear a dispute) it proves no more, at the most, than that *you* in particular shall persevere: but does not effect the general question, Whether others shall, or shall not?

† ch. xxxi. v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

9. Secondly, One who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the inspired apostle, † “War a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

Observe, 1. These men (such as Hymeneus and Alexander) had once the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience. This they once had, or they could not have *put it away*.

Observe, 2. They *made shipwreck* of the faith which necessarily implies the total and final loss of it. For a vessel once wrecked can never be recovered. It is totally and finally lost.

And the apostle himself in his second epistle to Timothy, mentions one of these two as irrecoverably lost. ‡ “*Alexander, says he, did me much evil: The Lord shall reward him according to his works.*” Therefore one who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

10. ‘But how can this be reconciled with the words of our Lord,’ “*He that believeth shall be saved?*”

Do you think these words mean *he that believes at this moment, shall certainly and inevitably be saved?*

If this interpretation be good, then by all the rules of speech, the other part of the sentence must mean, *he that does not believe at this moment, shall certainly and inevitably be damned.*

Therefore that interpretation cannot be good. The plain meaning then of the whole sentence, is, *He that believeth, if he continue in faith, shall be saved; he that believeth not, if he continue in unbelief, shall be damned.*

11. ‘But does not Christ say elsewhere,’ † “He that believeth hath everlasting life? And ‡ He that believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life?”

I answer, 1. The love of God is everlasting life. It is, in substance, the life of heaven. Now every one that believes, loves God, and therefore *hath everlasting life.*

2. Every one that believes *is therefore passed from death, spiritual death, unto life; and,*

3. *Shall not come into condemnation,* if he endureth in the faith unto the end: according to our Lord’s own word, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved:” and § “Verily I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”

† John ii. 36.

‡ c. vi. v. 24.

§ John viii. 51.

12. Thirdly, Those who are grafted into the good olive-tree, the spiritual, invisible church, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the apostle. || “Some of the branches are broken off, and thou art grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.

“Be not high-minded, but fear: if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee.

“Behold the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off.”

We may observe here, 1. The persons spoken to were actually grafted into the olive-tree.

2. This olive-tree is not barely the outward, visible church, but the invisible, consisting of holy believers. So the text. † “If the first fruit be holy, the lump is holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.” And, “Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.”

3. These holy believers were still liable to be cut off from the invisible church, into which they were then grafted.



4. Here is not the least intimation of those who were so cut off, being ever grafted in again.

Therefore those who are grafted into the good olive-tree, the spiritual, invisible church, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

13. “But how does this agree with the 29th verse, The gifts and calling of God are without repentance?”

The preceding verse shews; *as touching the election* (the unconditional election of the Jewish nation) “they are beloved for the fathers’ sake:” for the sake of their fore-fathers. It follows (in proof of this, that “they are beloved for the fathers’ sake,” that God has still blessings in store for the Jewish nation) For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance: for God doth not repent of any blessings he hath given them, or any privileges he hath called them to. The words here referred to, were originally spoken with a peculiar regard to these national blessings. † “God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent.”

14 \* ‘But do not you hereby make God changeable?’ Whereas § “with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?” By no means, God is unchangeably holy. Therefore he always “loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity.” He is unchangeably good. Therefore

† Numb. xxiii. 19.

‡ James i. 17.

he pardoneth all that *repent and believe the gospel*. And he is unchangeably just; therefore he *rewardeth every man according to his works*. But all this hinders not his resisting when they are proud, those to whom he gave grace when they were humble. Nay, his unchangeableness itself requires, that if they grow high-minded, God should cut them off: that there should be a proportionable change, in all the divine dispensations toward them.

15. \* “But how then is God *faithful*?” I answer, in fulfilling every promise which he hath made, to all to whom it is made, all who fulfil the condition of that promise. More particularly, 1st. || “God is faithful *in that* he will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able *to bear*.” 2d. § “The Lord is faithful to establish and keep you from evil” (if you put your trust in him) from all the evil which you might otherwise suffer, thro’ *unreasonable and wicked men*. 3d. † “Quench not the Spirit; hold fast that which is good; abstain from all appearance of evil: *and your* whole spirit, soul and body *shall* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” 4th. Be not disobedient unto the heavenly calling, and ‡ “God is faithful by whom ye were called, || 1 Cor. x. 13. § 2 Thess. iii. 2, 3. † 1 Thess. v. 19, &c. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 8, 9.

to confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet notwithstanding all this, unless you fulfil the condition, you cannot attain the promise.

"Nay, but are not *all the promises, yea and amen*"? They are. They are *firm* as the pillars of heaven. Perform the condition: and the promise is sure. Believe, and thou shalt be saved.

"But many promises are absolute and unconditional." In many, the condition is not exprest. But this does not prove, there is none implied. No promises can be exprest, in a more absolute form, than those above cited from the 89th psalm. And yet we have seen, a condition was implied even there, though none was exprest.

16. 'But there is no condition either exprest or implied, in those words of St. *Paul*,' || "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Suppose there is not (which will bear a dispute) yet what will this prove? Just thus much, that the apostle was at that time fully persuaded of his own perseverance. And I doubt not, but many believers at this day, have the very same persuasion, termed in scripture, the full assurance of hope. But this does not prove, that every be-

liever shall persevere : any more than that every believer is thus fully persuaded of his perseverance.

IV. 17. Fourthly, Those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, I am the vine ye are the branches, may nevertheless so fall from God, as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith our blessed Lord himself, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Here we may observe, 1. The persons spoken of were in *Christ, branches of the true vine* :

2. Some of these *branches abide not* in Christ, but *the Father taketh them away*.

3. The *branches which abide not are cast forth*, cast out from Christ and his church :

4. They are not only *cast forth but withered*; consequently never grafted in again. Nay,

5. They are not only *cast forth and withered*, but also *cast into the fire*. And,

6. They *are burned*. It is not possibly for words more strongly to declare, that even those who are now

branches in the true vine, may yet so fall, as to perish everlastingly.

18. By this clear, indisputable declaration of our Lord, we may interpret those which might be otherwise liable to dispute, wherein it is certain, whatever he meant beside, he did not mean to contradict himself. For example, “This is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing.” Most sure ; *all that God hath given him*, or (as it is exprest in the next verse) “every one which believeth on him,” namely, to the end, he “will raise up at the last day” to reign with him for ever.

Again, † “I am the living bread—If any man eat of this bread [by faith] he shall live for ever.” True ; if he continue to eat thereof. And who can doubt of it?

Again, § “My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

In the preceding text, the condition is only implied. In this it is plainly exprest. They are “my sheep” that “hear my voice,” that “follow me” in all holiness. And “if ye do those things ye shall never fall.” None shall “pluck you out of my hands.”

† John vi. 51.

§ Chap. x. 14.

Again, † “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loveth them unto the end.” *Having loved his own*, namely, the apostles, (as the very next words, *which were in the world* evidently shew) *he loved them unto the end* of his life, and manifested that love to the last.

17. Once more, || “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one.”

Great stress has been laid upon this text; and it has been hence inferred, that all *those whom* the Father *had given him*, (a phrase frequently occurring in this chapter) must infallibly persevere to the end.

And yet in the very next verse, our Lord himself declares, that one of *those whom* the Father *had given him*, did not persevere unto the end, but perished everlastingly.

His own words are, § “Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.”

So one even of these was finally lost! A demonstration that the phrase *Those whom thou hast given me*, signifies here (if not in most other places too) the twelve apostles, and them only.

† John xiii. 1.

|| Ch. 17. v. 11.

§ John xvii. 12.

20. On this occasion, I cannot but observe another common instance of begging the question, of taking for granted, what ought to be proved: it is usually laid down, as an indisputable truth, that whatever our Lord speaks to or of his apostles, is to be applied to all believers. But this cannot be allowed by any who impartially search the scriptures. They cannot allow, without clear and particular proof, that any one of those texts, which related primarily to the apostles (as all men grant) belong to any but them.

V. 21. Fifthly, Those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world, may yet fall back into those pollutions, and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the apostle Peter, † “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” (the only possible way of escaping them) “they are again intangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

† 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

That the *knowledge of the way of righteousness*, which they had attained, was an inward, experimental knowledge, is evident from that other expression, “They had escaped the pollutions of the world:” an expression parallel to that in the preceding chapter, † “Having escaped the corruption which is in the world.” And in both chapters, this effect is ascribed to the same cause: termed in the first, “The knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue;” in the second, more explicitly, “The knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

And yet they lost that experimental knowledge of Christ and the way of righteousness: they fell back into the same pollutions they had escaped; and were *again intangled therein and overcome. They turned from the holy commandment delivered to them, so that their latter end was worse than their beginning.*

Therefore those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world, many yet fall back into those pollutions and perish everlastingly.

22. And this is perfectly consistent with St. Peter's words, in the first chapter of his former epistle: “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvati-



on.” Undoubtedly so are all they who ever attain eternal salvation. It is the power of God only, and not our own, by which we are kept one day or one hour.

VI. 23. Sixthly, Those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit; may nevertheless so fall from God, as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the inspired writer to the Hebrews, †“ It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost—if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Must not every unprejudiced person see the expressions here used are so strong and clear, that they cannot without gross and palpable wresting, be understood of any but true believers?

They “were once enlightened:” an expression familiar with the apostle, and never by him applied to any but believers. So, “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.—The eyes of your understanding being *enlightened*, that ye may

† Ch. 6. v. 4. 6. Ephes. i. 17, 18, 19.

know what is the hope of his calling—And what is the exceeding greatness of his glory, to us-ward that believe.” So again, † “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This is a light which no unbelievers have. They are utter strangers to such enlightening, †† “The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.”

“They had tasted of the heavenly gift [emphatically so called] and were made partakers of the *Holy Ghost*.” So St. Peter likewise couples them together ; || “Be baptised for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the *Holy Ghost* :” whereby the love of God was shed abroad in their heart, with all the other fruits of the Spirit. Yea, it is remarkable, that our Lord himself in his grand commission to St. Paul (to which the apostle probably alludes in these words) comprises all these three particulars. § “I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” (here contracted into that one expression, *They were enlightened*) “that they may receive forgiveness of sins (the heavenly gift) and an inheritance

† 2 Cor. iv. 6.    †† v. 4.    || Acts ii. 38.    § Ch. 26. v. 18.

among them which are sanctified :'' which are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of all the sanctifying influences of the Spirit.

The expression, They *tasted* of the heavenly gift, is taken from the psalmist, † “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” As if he had said, be ye assured of his love, as of any thing you see with your eyes. And let the assurance thereof be sweet to your soul, as honey is to your tongue.

And yet those who had been thus enlightened, had tasted this gift, and been thus partakers of the Holy Ghost, so fell away, that it was impossible to renew them again to repentance.

“But the apostle only makes a supposition, If they shall fall away.”

I answer, The apostle makes no supposition at all. There is no *if* in the original. The words are, in plain English, “It is impossible to renew again unto repentance, those who were once enlightened” and have fallen away : therefore they must perish everlastingly.

24. “But if so, then farewell all my comfort.”

Then your comfort depends on a poor foundation. My comfort stands not on my opinion, either that a believer can, or cannot fall away, not on the remembrance

† Psalm xxxiv. 8.

of any thing wrought in me *yesterday* ; but on what is *to-day*. On my present knowledge of God in Christ, reconciling me to himself. On my now beholding the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; walking in the light as he is in the light, and having fellowship with the Father and with the Son. My comfort is, that through grace I now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his Spirit doth bear witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God. I take comfort in this and this only, that I see Jesus at the right hand of God ; that I personally for myself, and not for another, have an hope full of immortality ; that I feel the love of God shed abroad in my heart, being crucified to the world and the world crucified to me. My rejoicing is this, the testimony of my conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have my conversation in the world.

Go and find, if you can, a more solid joy, a more blissful comfort, on this side heaven. But this comfort is not shaken, be that opinion true or false ; whether the saints in general can or cannot fall.

If you take up with any comfort short of this, you lean on the staff of a broken reed, which not only will not bear your weight, but will enter into your hand and pierce you.

25. Seventhly. Those who live by faith, may yet fall from God and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the same inspired writer, † “The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” The just, the justified person, shall live by faith, even now shall he live the life which is hid with Christ in God; and if he endure unto the end, he shall live with God for ever. “But if any man draw back, saith the Lord, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”: That is, I will utterly cast him off; and accordingly the drawing back here spoken of, is termed in the verse immediately following, Drawing back to perdition.

“But the person supposed to draw back is not the same with him that is said to live by faith.”

I answer, 1. Who is it then? Can any man draw back from faith who never came to it? But,

2. Had the text been fairly translated, there had been no pretense for this objection. For the original runs thus: “The just man that lives by faith (so the expression necessarily implies, there being no other nominative to the verb) draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

“But the apostle adds, We are not of them who draw

† Heb. x. 38.

back unto perdition.” And what will you infer from thence? This is so far from contradicting what has been observed before, that it manifestly confirms it. It is a further proof, that there are those who draw back unto perdition, although the apostle was not of that number. Therefore those who live by faith, may yet fall from God and perish everlastingly.

26. “But does not God say to every one that lives by faith, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?”

The whole sentence runs thus. “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” True; provided your conversation be without covetousness, and ye be content with such things as ye have. Then you may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Do you not see, 1. That this promise, as here recited, relates wholly to temporal things? 2. That even thus taken, it is not absolute but conditional, and 3. That the condition is expressly mentioned in the very same sentence?

27. Eighthly, Those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, may so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus again saith the apostle, † “If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.”

It is undeniably plain, 1. That the person mentioned here, was once sanctified by the blood of the covenant. 2. That he afterwards by known, wilful sin, trod under foot the Son of God: And 3. That he hereby incurred a sorer punishment than death, namely, death everlasting.

Therefore, those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, may yet so fall as to perish everlastingly.

28. “What! Can the blood of Christ burn in hell? Or can the purchase of the blood of Christ go thither?”

I answer, 1. The blood of Christ cannot burn in hell, no more than it can be spilt on the earth. The heavens must contain both his flesh and blood, until the restitution of all things. But

2. If the oracles of God are true, one who was pur-

† Heb. x. 26.

chased by the blood of Christ may go thither. For he that was sanctified by the blood of Christ, was purchased by the blood of Christ. But one who was sanctified by the blood of Christ, may nevertheless go to hell; may fall under that fiery indignation, which shall for ever devour the adversaries.

29. “Can a child of God then go to hell? Or can a man be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow? If God is our Father once, is he not our Father always?” I answer,

1. \* A child of God, that is a true believer (for *he* that believeth is born of God) while he continues a true believer, cannot go to hell. But 2. If a believer make shipwreck of the faith, he is no longer a child of God. And then he may go to hell, yea, and certainly will, if he continues in unbelief. 3. If a believer may make shipwreck of the faith, then a man that believes now, may be an unbeliever some time hence; yea, very possibly to-morrow: But if so, he who is a child of God to-day, may be a child of the devil to-morrow. For 4. God is the Father of them that believe, so long as they believe. But the devil is the father of them that believe not, whether they did once believe or no.

30. The sum of all is this. If the scriptures are true, those who are holy or righteous in the judgment of God



himself: those who are endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience: those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible church: those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, I am the vine, ye are the branches: those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world: those who see the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and of the fruits of the Spirit: those who live by faith in the Son of God: those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant; may nevertheless so fall from God, as to perish everlastingly.

Therefore let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall.

*F I N I S.*

A TREATISE  
ON THE  
NATURE AND SUBJECTS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.



A  
T R E A T I S E  
ON THE  
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OF  
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

EXTRACTED FROM A LATE AUTHOR.

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SECTION XXXIX.  
AN  
EXTRACT  
ON THE  
NATURE AND SUBJECTS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

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MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

*Go ye therefore and teach (or disciple) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

THE FIRST PART.

*On the NATURE of CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.*

THE subject of our present inquiry, may be reduced to these two points, viz. What is Christian Baptism? And, Who are the proper subjects of it? These I shall endeavour to resolve by the light of divine revelation.— And, as I claim no dominion over the faith of any, so I would speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say.

The first thing to be considered, is, “What is Christian Baptism?”

In our text, Christ commissions his ministers to baptize the nations. We borrow the word Baptism from the Greeks; among whom it was commonly used to signify a wetting or washing in some mode, as I shall shew more particularly in the sequel. Among Christians, baptism is that Religious and Sacramental washing with Water, which Christ has appointed as the token and sign of our admission into the visible church, and of our having an interest in the privileges, and coming under the obligations of the gospel covenant.

But there are some, who are not content to enjoy all the liberty in our churches that they can reasonably desire for themselves. With them there is no true baptism without dipping: nor will they have Christian communion with any but those who have gone into the water. According to them there are no gospel churches in the world, except of those who have been dipped. None are regularly called or sent of God to preach the word, and administer gospel ordinances, till they have been dipped. None may presume to come, or be admitted to the table of the Lord, till they have been dipped. And thus, as much as in them lies, they unchurch all the churches in the world, except those who agree with

them in the mode of baptizing.—They deny the call and mission of their ministers; invalidate and nullify their ordinances, and excommunicate thousands, whom they cannot deny to be eminent for faith and holiness; and, in a word, make the door of the visible church so much narrower than Christ has made the gate of Heaven, that they reject far the greater part of those whom Christ receives.

Now, however willing we are to have Christian communion with all who, in a judgment of charity, are disciples of Christ; yet if we cannot have it, unless we will discard the greater part of our Christian brethren; deny the missions and call of those, whose ministry has been the means of our own conversion and edification, deny the validity of those ordinances, which have so often been breasts of nourishment and consolation to us, and renounce our baptism, which we are conscientiously persuaded is both valid and regular; this we cannot consent to.—And if any make this a ground of separation from us, let all who have imbibed the spirit of Christianity judge, whether it be our fault; and whether such rigidity in a matter so circumstantial, is agreeable to the meek and charitable spirit of the Gospel, or whether it does not rather look too much like Pharisaical superstition, to say no worse.



Methinks they have more reason to question the validity of their own administration, than to deny ours, upon the account of such irregularities as they charge upon us. For they cannot deny that the baptism which is administered in their communions was received at first by their predecessors, from the hands of such as, according to their principles, were unbaptized, and consequently could not be regularly authorized to administer the ordinance. If they think sprinkling to be no true baptism, much more have they reason to doubt the validity of immersion, when performed by an unbaptized and unauthorized administrator. And, if the first baptisms of that sect, when they first sprung up, were invalid, how can those administrations be thought valid and regular, which depend upon them.

We must therefore conclude, that dipping cannot be essential to baptism and Christian communion. The consequences are not to be endured.—The difficulties this principle will lead to are inextricable.—We never can be satisfied that there is any true church, or valid baptism and ordinances in the world, upon these narrow principles.

These considerations are certainly of so much weight, that the necessity of dipping ought not to be insisted on, unless there be clear and cogent reasons for it. The

substance of what is pleaded in favour of this mode, is reducible to these four heads :

“ That the proper meaning of the word Baptize, always implies dipping.

“ That the scriptural examples of baptism were administered in this way.

“ That this mode of administration is plainly pointed out, when the Apostle says, “ We are buried with Christ “ in baptism.”

“ That dipping only answers to, and fitly represents “ the thing signified in baptism.”

On the contrary, we think, that the necessity of dipping cannot be argued from any of these topics ; but that they will furnish us with a good warrant in favour of the mode of affusion or sprinkling. Let us examine the matter distinctly.

And our first inquiry is, What is the true and proper meaning of the word Baptize, and whether it always implies dipping ? We grant that the institution of Christ requires whatever is essential to a true Baptism ; but more than this cannot be held necessary. Now, we have no sort of evidence, that the word Baptize always implies dipping ; but it plainly appears to be of a larger and more general signification. It properly imports a wetting, washing, bathing, in any mode, either by dip-

ping or sprinkling, or bleeding, or weeping, or otherwise. In proof of this we appeal,

In the first place, to those who are acknowledged to have been best skilled in the Greek language. All the Lexicons and critics, so far as I have found, agree, that the word signifies to wet, or wash, as well as to dip.

But, perhaps, it may be said, “That critics are not  
“infallible, and it may be suspected that they are wrong,  
“in saying, That washing or wetting in general, in  
“whatever mode, is expressed and meant by the word  
“Baptism.”

I answer; in questions concerning the true meaning of words, the judgment of the learned, though not infallible, is doubtless of very considerable weight; and especially when we find a general consent among them. And that there certainly is upon this point, that washing or wetting, without respect to the mode, is Baptism, according to the usage of the word by Greek writers. But if any are yet unsatisfied, we must examine the matter further; whether it can certainly be made to appear that the word bears the sense which has been said.

They who have been at the pains to examine the Greek classics (Dr. Wall in particular) have proved by clear and manifold examples, that those ancient writers were wont to use the word Baptize to express a washing

or wetting, even where there was no dipping at all, but only a sprinkling. But I think it will be needless to inquire, how the word was commonly understood by heathen writers: it is the scriptural sense alone that we are searching after. If this can be ascertained, we need no more.

The word baptize is used in scripture to express such washings as did not require, and were not effected by dipping. In Luke xi. 38, we read, that a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dine with him, “ marvelled that he had not first Washed.” The Greek word is, Baptized. Here observe, that Jesus omitted to wash before dinner according to the Jewish custom, which was the reason why the Pharisee wondered; and that this Washing was properly called a Baptism. But how were the Jews wont ordinarily to wash before their meals? Did they dip themselves under water? If not, here is a plain proof and example of a washing that is called a baptism, without such a dipping. Now, if we turn to Mark vii. we shall see what that washing was that was customary among the Jews before eating. “ When the Pharisees “ and some of the Scribes saw some of his disciples eat “ bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) “ hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all “ the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not.

“ And when they come from the market, except they  
“ wash (the Greek is, except they are baptized) they  
“ eat not.” This shews, that in the language of the  
New Testament a person is said to be baptized, when a  
small part of his body is washed.

Again, in Heb. ix. 10, the Apostle speaks of the Jewish ritual as standing in divers Washings; the Greek is, different Baptisms. And it appears that purifications by sprinkling are especially intended. For he adds, with a plain reference to, and as an illustration of, what he had just said: “ If the blood of bulls and goats, and the  
“ ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth  
“ to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the  
“ blood of Christ,” &c. which shews that these purifications by sprinkling are instances of those washings or baptisms he had mentioned, and indeed some of the chief instances: otherwise it would not have been pertinent to his purpose to have noticed them on this occasion. A plain proof that sprinkling is a true baptism.

Further, the Apostle says of the Israelites who came out of Egypt, that “ they were baptized unto Moses  
“ in the cloud, and in the sea,” 1 Cor. x. 2. How were they baptized? Certainly they were not dipped. For they went on dry ground through the sea, which stood as a wall on each hand. It was the Egyptians only

that were baptized by immersion. According to the account Moses gives, the Israelites could not otherwise be baptized in the cloud and sea, than by being sprinkled with rain from the one and a spray from the other, as they passed along: to which Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8, 9, is thought to refer. Here is then another instance of baptism by sprinkling; which was a token of the separation or sanctification of the people to God. This gives a natural and easy account of the matter. But how unnatural and strained is our opponents' way of explaining it: "That the people having the sea on each hand, and the "cloud over their heads, seemed to be as it were dipped "or enclosed in water." On which I would observe, that the Apostle says not that they seemed to be as it were baptized, but in plain terms that they were baptized. But whatever resemblances of dipping, people may imagine, immersion without wetting is certainly no real baptism. For whether the mode of washing be essential or not, yet the washing or wetting itself is indeed essential to a true and proper baptism. If people may be baptized by having the water round them, though they were not wet by it at all, the dry hold of a ship upon the water would serve as well as Jordan: and, by going down into it, we shall be dipped in the sea in like manner as the Israelites were.—The fathers were baptized

in the cloud and sea.—A true baptism necessarily implies wetting. They were not wet by immersion—they could not therefore be baptized by immersion—whatever washing they received could be only by sprinkling.—It was therefore in this mode undoubtedly that they were baptized. Which is another proof that sprinkling is a mode of baptism.

Let us now consider the words of Christ, Luke xii, 50, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how “am I straitened till it be accomplished.” Christ here calls his sufferings a baptism. The sacred body of the blessed Jesus was truly and literally baptized.—He was wet and bathed in his own tears, and sweat, and blood, in his agony in the garden, and when he was scourged, and nailed to the cross. He was baptized and sanctified by the blood of the covenant, Heb. x. 29, that is, by his own blood; even as the Jewish high priests were baptized, sanctified, and consecrated with water and the blood of beasts, as types of Christ. And accordingly it was a common expression of the ancient fathers, concerning the martyrs, who had shed their blood in bearing witness to the Christian faith, that they were baptized with their own blood.—Here is then, I think, another very good proof, that dipping is no ways essential to baptism.—For, Christ was not dipped, and his

martyrs are not dipped in their bloody baptism ; but he was wet, and tinged, and bathed in his sweat, and blood issuing from his pores and veins.

Let us now make some remarks on the baptism with the Holy Ghost, which is often spoken of. This is indeed a spiritual baptism, by which the subjects of it were sanctified, consecrated, and separated to God, in a higher and more eminent sense, than those were who had only been consecrated by water baptism. But how is this spiritual baptism explained? There are several expressions which are plainly of the same import ; such as the “pouring out of the Spirit” upon the subject. When the Apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, according to Christ’s promise, Acts i. 5, Peter observes, that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will “pour out my Spirit,” Acts ii. 17, and again, verse 33, “That Christ being by the right hand of God exalted, “and having received of the Father the promise of “the Holy Ghost, he hath shed or poured forth those “things which ye now see and hear.” Here we see “that pouring upon,” and baptizing, are synonymous expressions. The one explains the other. Now, if the pouring out of the Spirit be the baptism of the Spirit, the pouring of water must also be a baptism of water.—



It is to be well observed, that as the Holy Spirit is in scripture often signified by water, as a fit emblem of his sanctifying and comforting influences ; so the conferring of the Spirit upon us, which is undoubtedly the true intendment of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is not represented by the similitude of dipping into water, but as a pouring or sprinkling of water upon us.—Isa. xlv. 3, “I will pour waters on the thirsty, and floods on the dry ground ; I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring.” See also Ezek. xxxvi. 27, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart will I give you,” &c. All which I think proves plainly, that sprinkling is in scripture considered as a mode of baptism.—I will add one remark more. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is termed an unction or anointing, 1 John ii. 20, 27. The holy oil, with which persons were anointed in their consecration, was a sign or emblem of the Holy Spirit given to them, to fit them for the offices to which they were called. The same is also signified by Christian baptism. Now, it is by pouring on of oil that persons are anointed ; and it is by pouring out of the Spirit upon us, that our anointing or baptism with the Holy Ghost is expressed. As therefore baptism answers in signification to anointing, we may well conclude, that it may

properly be administered in the same way, that is, by affusion. Can we doubt whether affusion be a true baptism, when we find that in scripture, Baptizing, Pouring, Sprinkling, and Anointing, are parallel, and signify the same thing?

One remark more I will add. In all the different translations of the New Testament that I have seen, I have not found that the word *baptizo* in the original is ever rendered by a word signifying or implying immersion. But they either retain the original word, or render it washing or ablution; which we cannot think they would have done, if the authors had not been satisfied that this is the true scriptural sense.

To find and ascertain the signification of the word, will, I think, determine the dispute concerning the mode of Baptism. For which reason, I have examined the matter more carefully. And the conclusion in which this inquiry has issued, will not be at all weakened, but rather much confirmed by the account we have in the scriptures of the administration of this ordinance. And this leads us to consider,

Secondly, Whether the necessity of dipping can be argued from these scriptural precedents. Some suppose, that “John Baptist and the Apostles baptized by immersion only: And that we are bound herein strictly

“to follow their example.” On the contrary, we can find no certainty that immersion was ever practised in the apostolic age. It is morally certain that this was not the constant mode of administration.

It is true, we read that Jesus was baptized by John in Jordan; and then came up out of the water, Mark i. 9, 10. “That the Jews were also baptized of John “in Jordan,” Matt. iii. 6. “That John baptized in “Enon, because there was much water,” John iii. 23. “That the Eunuch went down into the water with “Philip, and when he was baptized they came up out of “the water,” Acts viii. 38, 39. But whether any of these were dipped is uncertain. It is not even certain whether in any of these instances they went into and were baptized, in the water; though the texts are so rendered in our English Bible. But the Greek, which is the authentic standard, will fairly admit of this sense, as critics have often observed, viz. That they went down to, were baptized at, and went up from the water.\*

\* The Greek text does not determine whether Jesus and the Jews were baptized in Jordan or only at Jordan, for the particles (en and eis) here used, signify, in, at, or to. See Rom. viii. 34 (en), At the right hand of God. Nor is it certain that the Eunuch went into the water. The particle (eis) is often rendered to, John xx. 4. The other disciple came first (eis) to the sepulchre, yet went he

But, waving this remark, supposing they did go into the water, and were there baptized ; it does not follow that they were plunged. It is nothing strange or improbable if they stepped into the water, that they might be baptized by affusion. Though there was much water, or many waters (as the phrase properly signifies) at Enon, where John was baptizing ; this is no proof that he dipped, or made use of much water in baptism, or that there was even a convenient depth of water for such a purpose. Travellers have reported that there are only springs and small rivulets to be found in this place. As multitudes resorted to John, a place that was well supplied with water, for their use and refreshment, would be most convenient, suppose none of them were dipped, as I find no certainty that they were. And if any should think that the administration of baptism at rivers, and in places where there was plenty of water, is a circum-

not in. Philip and the Eunuch went up (ek) from the water : so the particle is elsewhere rendered. See Matt. xii. 42, The queen of the south came (ek) from the uttermost ends of the earth. Jesus when he was baptized went up (apo) from the water ; as the phrase most properly signifies. I do not mention these things as faulting our English translation. All that I aim at is, that the original may fairly be rendered either way ; and that this circumstance, as it is immaterial, so it is left undetermined.

stance that favours immersion, though it is needless to contest this point, yet we might easily mention several things as probable arguments that immersion was not practised in these instances. It seems unlikely that mixed multitudes of both sexes should be dipped naked. And it was contrary to the Jewish custom to bathe with any of their clothes on; in which respect they were so strict, that they held a person to be unclean, if but the top of one of his fingers were covered, when he bathed himself for his cleansing.—Or if immersion were received with the clothes on, this would require a shifting of apparel, which we have no hint of. Nor can we easily conceive how strangers, who came from home without any design of being baptized, as was the case with some, should be furnished with necessary change of raiment for this purpose. Or how John should be able, without a miracle, to bear the hardship of standing in the water up to his waist, a great part of his time, to dip the multitudes that came to him. These circumstances must surely weaken, if not overbalance, all probabilities or presumptions that can be pleaded in favour of immersion, in these instances.

But be this as it may, we have accounts of several instances, so circumstanced, that the supposition of their being dipped is most incredible. Particularly the 3,000

baptized on the day of Pentecost. For it was at least nine o'clock when Peter began his sermon. After this he had a long conference, and with many words counselled, testified, and exhorted them. Then the Apostles had to receive a confession of faith from each of them distinctly: and then baptize them severally: which, though done in the quickest manner, would require the whole remainder of the day. But in the slower way of immersion, we cannot conceive how it could be done by the Apostles without a miracle. Nor may we suppose that the Apostles were assisted in this work by the seventy disciples, who appear not to have been authorized to administer the ordinances. Besides, how incredible is it, that they should on a sudden find conveniences for dipping so many, in the midst of a city, among zealous opposers: or that so many strangers should either be baptized naked, or have change of raiment. We cannot rationally think, that they could be baptized otherwise than by affusion. Nor is it probable that Paul was baptized by immersion: for, upon Ananias coming in to him, putting his hands upon him, &c. we read, that he immediately received his sight, arose and was baptized; that is, in the house where he was: there being no hint of his going out to any water, weak as he was with long fasting

and agitation of mind.\* It is not probable that those were dipped who were baptized at the house of Cornelius, Acts x. 47. Peter seeing them filled with the Holy Ghost, said, "Can any man forbid water, that these 'should not be baptized.'" The natural sense is, Can any forbid water, to be brought or provided to baptize these: not, whether any could forbid their going to the water. And, in the account of their baptism, there is no hint of their going from the house. It is highly improbable, that the jailer and his house were baptized by immersion; for, this was done in the night, and in the prison, where there was no river nor pool to be imagined. Can it be thought, that the jailer, with his whole family, and his prisoners, whom he was charged to keep at his peril, should at such an hour, grope away in the dark, or go with a lanthorn or torch to a river or pool, no one knows where, and that through a city, just waked up with a great earthquake, and the streets, it is probable, filled with the frightened citizens?

\* Acts ix. 17, 18. Note, Paul was baptized without a profession of faith, upon Christ's testimony concerning him, that he was a chosen vessel. The testimony of Christ, that the infants of believers are of the kingdom of heaven, are holy, are interested in the promise, is as good a warrant for baptizing them without a profession of their faith.

They might all well expect to be taken up and punished for helping the prisoners to make their escape. Nor is it credible that the Apostles would have done such a thing, who would not leave the prison till the magistrates took them out. The administration of baptism would, doubtless, have been deferred, if it could not then have been attended to without all this difficulty and danger. Besides, there is no account of their going out to the water or leaving the prison. The house of the jailer, into which he brought the Apostles, seems to have been a separate apartment of the building, where the keeper dwelt, that he might conveniently attend his charge. And we may here make this general remark; that among all the instances of baptism mentioned in the New Testament, it is never said or intimated, that they went from the place where they happened to be, to any river or stream, that they might be baptized in or at it. But all who are said to have been baptized in any stream, were by it, when they first offered themselves to baptism.

Thirdly, The necessity of immersion is argued from the Apostle's words, Rom. vi. 4, "We are buried with Christ in baptism." Which words have been supposed to refer to this mode of burying the subject in water. But it does not appear that any such reference or allusion



is here intended. The Apostle is here shewing, that “Christians may not live any longer in sin, inasmuch as “they are dead to it.” To prove and illustrate this, he reminds us of our being “baptized into Christ.” By baptism, we are not only dedicated to Christ, and brought into a special relation to him as his disciples ; but, our baptism is the outward sign of our ingrafting into Christ, and so of our spiritual union to him, and communion with him, in the benefits obtained for the members of his body, by his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection ; and also of our obligation to a spiritual conformity to his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, as is noted and illustrated in what follows. Being thus “baptized into Christ, we are baptized “into his death.” We not only participate of the benefits obtained by his death, but are bound to a spiritual conformity to him in his crucifixion and death ; by the crucifixion and death of our old man, with its affections and lusts. “Therefore we are buried with him by “baptism into death.” Baptism signifies our union and communion with Christ ; and our profession and obligation to a conformity to him, “in his burial,” as well as his crucifixion and death. The old man, with his deeds, must be put off, utterly rejected and buried. We must, in respect of our former lusts and conversation, be as if

we were “dead and buried.” We, by our baptism, are obliged to have done with these things ; to endeavour, that the body of sin may be quite mortified and destroyed. But this work of mortification, in which “we are made conformable to Christ’s death,” is in order to a spiritual resurrection ; in conformity to the example, and by the quickening virtue of Christ’s resurrection : “That like as Christ was raised from the dead “by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk “in newness of life.” So that according to the Apostle, baptism imports our union and conformity to Christ in his crucifixion, death, and resurrection, as well as in his burial. And why baptism should be supposed to bear an outward resemblance of his burial, rather than of his crucifixion and death, or why any should fancy an allusion to the mode of immersion, I can see no reason.

I might further observe, that dipping a person in water does not resemble the burial of Christ, who was not laid in a common grave, but in a tomb hewn out of the side of a rock, into which they entered by a door. Nor does it resemble a common burial, which is not so properly the letting down the body into the grave, as the casting in the earth upon it ; of which the sprinkling or pouring of water on a person is no unfit representa-

tion ; but dipping bears no resemblance to it. It is not an outward, but a spiritual conformity to Christ's death and burial that is intended by our being buried with him in baptism.

Let us now inquire, Fourthly, Whether dipping answers to, and represents the thing signified in baptism better than sprinkling. It has just been observed, that baptism is the outward sign and token of the application of the benefits of redemption to believers, in their justification and sanctification. "Christ washes us from "our sins in his own blood." And baptism, as the outward sign of the application of Christ's blood, is, "for the washing away of sins." But how is the application of Christ's blood for our cleansing represented? It is called, "the blood of sprinkling." And the Apostle speaks of the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." But we are never said to be cleansed from sin by being dipped into the blood of Christ.—Again, baptism is the instituted sign of our having the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon us. "Be baptized," says Peter, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Now the donation of the Holy Ghost is never expressed by our being dipped into the Holy Ghost; but by his being poured out, and our being sprinkled thereby; which is called our being baptized

with the Spirit. Sprinkling is therefore a more apt representation of the application of the blood of Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, for the cleansing of our souls from sin. The argument, therefore, from the analogy of the sign with the thing signified, is plainly in favour of sprinkling rather than dipping. It is true, our spiritual conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection is not unfitly signified by immersion. But sprinkling more aptly represents the application of the benefits of redemption to us; which is the main thing signified by baptism.

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## THE SECOND PART.

### *On the* SUBJECTS *of* BAPTISM.

THE second part of the argument in hand, was to consider who are the proper subjects of baptism, or to whom this ordinance is to be administered.

Our present inquiry, concerning the subjects of baptism, is, Who they are that, according to the gospel rule, are to be admitted by the church? In answer to which, we say, that all who make a credible profession

of faith, are proper subjects, together with infants, or children in minority. It is agreed, that professed believers are subjects of baptism. And that this ordinance is not to be administered to one of adult age, unless he has in some manner made a credible profession of (at least, penitential) faith. But that the infants of members of the visible church are to be received as members also, and as the proper subjects of baptism, has been denied by some ; and the administering the ordinance to infants, has been censured as irregular, unwarrantable, of no validity or advantage.

I shall therefore endeavour to prove and vindicate the “divine right of infant baptism,” as briefly and plainly as I can.

In pursuance of this design, I shall, first, represent the chief and plainest reason, upon which I believe infant baptism to be a divine ordinance.—Then I will consider the principal objections that are made to it.

But before I enter on the proof of the point before us, let it be observed and remembered—That there is nothing positive in the New Testament against infant baptism. It is no where said or hinted, that the Apostles forbid or refused, or declined to baptize infants ; or that any child of a believer was, after he was grown up, baptized upon a profession of faith. It must also be

acknowledged, that infants are capable not only of the outward sign of baptism, but also of having an interest in the blessings and grace of the New Covenant, and coming under its bonds, which is the thing signified in the ordinance, and that they need those New Covenant blessings. Further, it is no where declared in scripture, either in express, or equivalent terms, that “adult persons only,” or that “none but those who believe,” or profess faith, are to be baptized. In short, there is absolutely and perfectly nothing that stands in the way of our embracing the doctrine of infant baptism, if we can find any kind of evidence in favour of it, either express or consequential.—This then is what we have now to inquire into, viz. Whether any such evidence appears? And I think enough may be collected from the Scriptures to put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt.

And my first argument is taken from the church membership of infants:

All those who are to be received as members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism.—But infants are to be received as members of the visible church. They are therefore subjects of baptism.

First, I say that all who are to be received as members of the visible church, are the subjects of baptism.

This is granted by our opponents, particularly by Dr. Gill, most expressly. "Let it be proved," says he, "that infants are or ought to be members of gospel churches—and we shall readily admit them," i. e. to baptism.—Answer to Dickinson, p. 89.

Some have pretended "that it is inconsistent to say, that a right to baptism is grounded upon church membership, and yet that we are admitted into the church by baptism." But this is a mere cavil. The right of church membership is one thing; and admission into the visible church is another. They who are qualified for admission into the church, according to the rule of the gospel, are members by right, before they are members by admission. And they are accordingly to be received as rightful members by baptism, and so admitted in an orderly way to those subsequent privileges of Christian communion, to which baptism is a regular and solemn introduction. For the right of church membership, though it gives an immediate claim to admission into the church by baptism, yet it does not give an immediate and orderly claim to any, while unbaptized, to all the privileges of admitted and baptized members. But be this as it will, whether the right of church membership be antecedent to baptism, or baptism be antecedent to church membership, it cannot be denied that all those

are the proper subjects of baptism, who are, or ought to be admitted as members of the gospel church.

Now if it can be made to appear, that infants are, or ought to be acknowledged and admitted as members of the visible church, we must unavoidably conclude that they are subjects of baptism. And this is what I undertake to prove. And there is a remarkable passage recorded by three of the Evangelists which seems to be sufficient to determine the point. I will recite it at large, collecting all the particulars mentioned in the several accounts. Matt. xix. 13, 15, Mark x. 13, 16, Luke xviii. 15, 16,—“And they brought unto him little children, infants, that he should touch them, put his hands on them, and pray: and his Disciples rebuked them [i. e. those who brought them]. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and called them to him, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put or laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

These were young “infant” children which were brought to Christ, whom he took up in his arms, as we



are expressly told. They who brought them gave evidence of their faith in him ; for they brought them that he might put his hands on them and pray. We may also observe, that it was agreeable to the mind of Christ that they should be brought to him ; for when the disciples rebuked those that brought them, Jesus seeing it, was much displeased. The disposition they manifested on this occasion to despise little ones, and set themselves above them, as if young children were not fit to be introduced into their company, Christ did much dislike. And he was also displeased, as it seems, to find they were so dull of understanding, and so mistaken in their apprehensions. They might reasonably have concluded, that as little children always had been received as members of the church of God, as Christ had not intimated any design to cut them off from this their right, as they needed his blessing, and were capable of it ; on these grounds they ought to have concluded, that it was fit and proper that they should be presented to the Messiah, the king of Israel, as his disciples and subjects, that they might receive his blessing.—But the disciples seem to have reasoned in a quite different manner, as some others have done since. “ To what purpose is it to bring these “ little children hither ? They are not capable of being “ taught. They do not understand what is intended

“to be done with them. It will be of no advantage  
“to them. We cannot look upon them to be believers,  
“or fit to belong to our society.” Such thoughts as  
these they seem to have had. For our Saviour’s words  
on this occasion are as plain and pointed as possible  
against this error.—Their mistake at this time gave our  
Lord a fit occasion to declare his mind fully and ex-  
pressly upon the case of infants; that they are of the  
kingdom of heaven; and therefore none should forbid,  
or discourage any from bringing and presenting them  
to him. “Suffer little children to come unto me,  
“and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of  
“heaven.”

From these words it appears, in the first place, that  
infants are the children of the covenant, belong to the  
church of God: for this is what we are here to under-  
stand by the kingdom of heaven, as I shall shew pres-  
ently. Such as these, properly and naturally signifies,  
persons of this sort or class, and that come under this  
denomination.—They were included among that sort of  
persons; even as the woman taken in adultery was one  
of those condemned by the law, “which commanded  
“that such should be stoned.”

Some would fain have the meaning of this expression  
to be, “That those who resemble little children in

“humility belong to the kingdom of heaven.” But how strained and unnatural is this? Christians are to resemble lambs and doves for meekness, as well as infants. But what should we think of a man that should say to his servant: “Suffer the sheep and lambs to come to me, and hinder them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven?”—Would not this be highly improper, and worse than ridiculous? And yet this would be just as proper as the words of Christ are, according to the meaning that these would force upon them.—The reason Christ gives why the little children should be brought to him, is, because of such is the kingdom of God. And a very plain and pertinent reason it is, as we understand it. For if children belong to the kingdom of Christ, we can see a manifest fitness that they should be presented to him as his subjects and people, that he might own them, and give them his blessing. But what weight or pertinency is there in such a reason as our adversaries would assign for bringing these children to Christ? “Suffer little children to come to me, for though it is true they belong not to my kingdom, yet the subjects of my kingdom are somewhat like them. There is that in little children which looks like meekness and humility, and is a fit emblem of it.” Must every thing then that any ways resembles true Christians,

be brought to Christ, for him to lay his hands upon it, and pray over it? What an uncouth, unintelligible reason is this for bringing children to Christ? Which will serve as well for a reason why lambs and doves should be brought and presented to him, as Mr. Henry well observes. Because the kingdom of God consists of grown persons, meek and harmless like children, is it a just and plain consequence, that children should be brought and presented to Christ; though they belong not to his kingdom? Surely no one has any cause to be displeased with another (as Christ was with his disciples) for not apprehending weight in such a reason as this. Indeed there is no weight in it.

Again, the reception which Christ gave these children, and his actions towards them, may put it out of all doubt that he acknowledged them as the subjects of his kingdom. For he took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Christ never pronounced a solemn blessing upon any but those whom he owned as the subjects of his kingdom. By laying his hands on these children and blessing them, he recognized them as his own people, and put upon them the same token of acknowledgment which he gave his disciples immediately before his ascension. The blessing was always looked upon as a sacred thing, which belonged only to

the professed worshippers and people of God ; especially that solemn religious blessing in the name of God, with imposition of hands, which had been practised in the church in all ages. None were the subjects of this, upon any occasion that we read of, but they that belonged to the church. When we read that God blessed Noah, and Abraham, and the other patriarchs, we have no doubt but that hereby he owned them, in the most solemn manner, as his people. And shall any be so unreasonable as to deny or call in question the church membership of infants, after Christ himself has not only declared that of such is the kingdom of heaven, but has given this further token and testimony of the same, even laying on his hands, and pronouncing a blessing upon them : which is as distinguishing a token of church membership as baptism itself, or any other ordinance whatever.

Infants then must be allowed to belong to the kingdom of heaven. Christ has declared them so by words and actions as significant as possible. But, it may be inquired, What are we to understand by the kingdom of heaven? I answer, it is plainly the church that is here meant.—It will be needless to confirm this by particular quotations ; they are so many, and so well known to all who have read the New Testament with

any attention. Nor is it denied by any that I know of: and, I think, it is the Visible Church that is to be understood.

Christ declares, that these children were then members of the kingdom of heaven. “Of such is the “kingdom of heaven.” But, will any say, that the kingdom of glory consists of those who are here upon earth? They were upon earth, and were in the kingdom of heaven upon earth, if they were in it at all; that is, in the kingdom of grace or visible church.

But, if it were supposed, that these words are to be understood as affirming, that children belong to the invisible church, and as such, are heirs of the kingdom of glory; yet this will prove that they ought to be acknowledged and received as members of the visible church. For, can they be reasonably refused a place in the church on earth, whom Christ affirms to be heirs of heaven? If we have evidence that they belong to Christ, as his peculiar people, there needs no more to give any one a clear and undoubted right, in the account of the church, to be received as belonging to him, or as members of the church on earth. And what better evidence can there be that any are subjects of the kingdom of heaven, than the testimony of the king himself? Is there any profession of faith that ought to have more

credit in the church? Though infants are not able to speak for themselves, yet Christ has spoken for them, declaring, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And, is not the testimony of Christ a sufficient credential to warrant our receiving them? Our Lord subjoins the following memorable words, in which he strikes at the very root of his disciples’ error, which their conduct discovers. “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom “of God as a little child, shall not enter therein.” The disciples were much disposed to stand upon their distinctions. They seemed to think that they had a clearer and better title to the privileges of the Messiah’s kingdom than infants. They were actual believers and followers of Christ; which could not be said of babes. If these are admitted to have a part in this kingdom, it must be considered as a special indulgence and favour to them, who have done nothing to give them any claim to such a privilege. Whereas, thought they, we have left all for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. And, shall these be allowed to have as good a title as we? “Yea, says Christ, their title is as good as yours in all respects.” It is, indeed, an act of mere grace and favour, that infants are admitted. They have done nothing to merit it. And, do you imagine, that any thing that you have done gives you any peculiar claim to these privi-

leges? Do you consider the kingdom of heaven as the due reward for any doings of yours? No, be it known to you, that your title arises entirely from the free grace and gift of God, as well as theirs. If you will not receive the kingdom of God, and hold it by the same title that little children do (viz. as the free gift of God made over to them by his covenant and promise, as his adopted children) you shall not enter therein.\*

The common exception, “That these infants were not baptized by Christ, nor were brought to him for any such purpose,” is altogether impertinent. We do not argue, that infants are the subjects of baptism, because we suppose that these infants were baptized by Christ; but that infants belong to the church, is here plainly asserted; and that all such as belong to the church, are the subjects of baptism, cannot be denied. It is further asked, “Why Christ did not then baptize them, if they were proper subjects? Before men urge such questions, they should make it appear, that these

\* “Receiving the kingdom of God as a little child,” is commonly explained to mean, receiving the privileges of the kingdom of heaven with humility, or a child-like temper. I think, it gives a sense more apposite to the occasion, if we understand the words as importing, that we must receive and hold the kingdom of heaven by the same right and title with children.



infants had not been baptized before. However, whether they were baptized or not, is of no importance to us. If they were not baptized, it is not incumbent on us to give the reason. But it is incumbent on those who ask such questions, to shew, Why it should be thought necessary, that all members of the gospel church should then be baptized before baptism was fully settled as the ordinary rite of admission, which was not till after Christ's resurrection. But, if Christ did not baptize these children, yet he gave them as sure a token of church membership as baptism itself, when he laid his hands upon them and blessed them. It is further objected, "Christ's entire silence about infant baptism at this time, has no favourable aspect on such a practice." Answer, Christ having asserted the church membership of infants, and solemnly blessed them with imposition of hands, and having said nothing against the baptism of them, more than of adults, these things have a very favourable aspect on the practice of infant baptism, and imply a good warrant for it. After having thus owned them as his people, both by words and actions, if it had been his will that the sacrament of induction should not henceforth be administered to infants, as heretofore, but only to adults, he would not have failed to have given some intimation on this occasion, that notwithstanding

what he had said and done, infants were not to be baptized. Christ's saying nothing against infant baptism on this occasion, when it appears so necessary to prevent mistakes, had infant baptism been contrary to his will, has no favourable aspect on the practice of those who refuse to admit them.

I have enlarged the more upon this proof of the church membership of infants, because I take it to be very decisive and unanswerable. And, I shall lay before you another passage, which will fairly lead us to the same conclusion. Mark ix. 36, 37, "Jesus took a child, and set him in the midst of them, and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them; "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me."

Now observe, Christ says, "Whosoever shall receive "one of such children" (or, "this child," as it is in Luke ix. 48) "in my name, receiveth me." To receive one in the name of Christ, is to receive him as belonging to him. So the words are clearly explained in the 41st verse of this chapter, "Whosoever shall give "you to drink a cup of water in my name, because ye "belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not "lose his reward." Since then Christ would have us receive little children in his name, as belonging to him,

and declares, that in so doing we receive him; we may assuredly conclude, that they are to be reputed as belonging to him, as the members of his church. When, therefore, a believer offers his child to the church, to be received by baptism, as belonging to Christ, and admitted as a member of the same body; shall they refuse to receive it in his name? Shall they thus despise Christ's little ones, as to shut the doors of his house upon them, and, as much as in them lies, "cast them out of the inheritance of the Lord, and declare that they have no part in the Lord, and lay such a stumbling block before our children, to make them cease from fearing the Lord?" Josh. xxii. 25. God forbid! Take heed that ye despise not, and offend not one of these little ones.

Let us now consider more particularly the words of our text, containing the Apostolic commission. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It has been observed, that the words properly signify, "Go make or admit all nations Disciples, baptizing them—teaching them," &c. This, our opposers do not deny. But, they say, that no one can be made a disciple but by teaching; which is true,

only with respect to adults: because no “such persons,” are to be admitted into the school of Christ, but by their own consent, and a previous profession of their faith in him, and obedience to him; and this necessarily pre-requires teaching. But to argue from hence, that infants are not to be admitted as disciples, because not in a present capacity of being taught, and professing their faith, is no better than begging the question, talking at random, and without proof. Though adults are not made disciples, till they are first taught, and are not admitted but upon a profession of faith, yet with infants the case is otherwise. They are to be admitted by the order of Jesus Christ, without a personal “profession and consent,” of which they are not capable. But this may be further considered afterwards.

Let us now see whether any thing can be argued from the words, in favour of infant discipleship and baptism.—When the Apostles received an order to disciple all nations, they would naturally understand, that they had it in charge to make all nations proselytes, to introduce and admit them into the church of Christ, as a school, in which they were to be taught and trained up in the knowledge and observance of christianity, in order to their being meet for heaven. It is true neither infants nor adults are expressly named. But the Apostles

were sent to disciple and baptize "the nations," which none can deny, include persons of every age. And the Apostles must needs have understood that it was their business to make Disciples of the infants, and baptize them as well as others. For, let it be remembered that the Apostles had been educated in the Jewish church, of which infants had all along been undoubted members. They understood that the membership of such had never been called in question, since there had been a church in the world. They knew that the infants of proselytes from among the Gentiles were constantly admitted and circumcised, together with their parents. Not only so, but such infants were baptized; as the ancient Jews report. They knew that Christ had taught them that little children belonged to the kingdom of Heaven; that he had accordingly laid his hands, and pronounced a solemn blessing upon them; and signified his will that they be received in his name, as belonging to him; and that themselves had been reproved by him for forbidding infants to be brought to receive his blessing. They knew, that the admission of the children into the church, with the parents, was always reckoned a great privilege; that Christ never said or intimated that it was his will that infants should be cut off, or not admitted still as members of the gospel church. They understood that

the privileges of the church were to be enlarged, and not abridged in any respect.—Now, the Apostles, whose views and apprehensions may have been such as has been represented, would, without doubt, have understood that they were instructed by their commission, to admit the children with the parents into the number of proselytes by the initiating rite, as had been the constant practice of the church.—They must have understood the matter as a minister who had never heard that infant baptism was ever objected to, would understand his charge, if he was ordained and sent out to preach to the heathen, and gather churches among them, baptizing them. It would be unnatural, and highly unreasonable for them to understand the matter otherwise. This then must be received as the just interpretation of the commission. It is the natural and true meaning: which is so far from cutting off infants from the gospel church, that it furnishes us with a good warrant for admitting them.

We have another unanswerable proof, that the children of believers are fit to be members of the visible church, and subjects of baptism, in 1 Cor. vii. 14, “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” The Apostle had just said, that a believer ought not to sepa-

rate from an unbelieving wife, who was willing to continue in the marriage relation. And in these words he removes a doubt which might be apt to arise in their minds, viz. Whether the children born in such a marriage were to be reckoned as fit to be of the church, with the believing parents; or were to be ranked with the unbelieving parent, and so reckoned among heathens that were without?—Though infants had always been received as members of the Old Testament church, yet when the Jews had, in the time of Ezra married strange wives which had borne them children, these children were not received; but it was ordered that they be put away, together with their heathen parents, as unclean. It might therefore be a scruple, whether a believer, and member of the Christian church, were obliged or allowed to live in the state of marriage with an unbeliever; and whether their children were not to be excluded from the church, as the unclean offspring of a heathen parent; as had been determined among the Jews in the case just mentioned. This point, the Apostle plainly resolves, declaring, that a believer is not defiled by having conjugal society with an unbeliever. On the contrary, says he, “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife,” or rather is sanctified in or to the wife, “and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in or to the husband.” That

is, the believer, has a lawful and sanctified enjoyment of an unbelieving yoke-fellow. For, as the Apostle elsewhere teaches us, "All things are pure to him that is pure. And every creature of God is good, and no thing to be refused. For, it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Thus the unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified to the believer, as every creature of God is, which we may have occasion to use. Formerly, all that were out of the pale of the church were accounted unclean; and a Jew would have been defiled by living with a heathen wife. But now there is no defilement in the lawful use of any of God's creatures. They are all sanctified to a believer. Or we may take the meaning of these words thus: a believer and unbeliever being married together, are one flesh; they are one principle or source of offspring. But though an unbeliever, considered in himself personally, is unholy, and has no claim to church privileges; yet the children are entitled to these privileges, as fully and perfectly in all respects, as if both the parents were believers. For the unbelieving husband being one flesh with the believing wife, is sanctified in or by her, so far as respects the church privileges of children. The husband, though an unbeliever, is, in consequence of his union in marriage with a believer, in some sort sanctified. The unbeliever, in



this relation is capable of transmitting church privileges to his offspring, to as good advantage as any believer.

The Apostle goes on—"Else were your children "unclean," as the heathen were termed and accounted. All those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of the promise, and not members of the church of God, were commonly reputed uncircumcised and unclean. They were not admitted into the holy place, or to attend on holy ordinances. Now, if the unbelieving wife were not sanctified to and by the believer, as has been said, the children must have been unclean, and so not be received as members of the church, and subjects of holy ordinances.—" But now "they are holy"—and are to be admitted into the visible church, into the society and fellowship of those who are visibly separated from the rest of the world, and devoted to God as his holy people. The word, Holy, as it is used in scripture, is applied to persons and things that are devoted and dedicated to God. Men are termed holy either as being separated from the rest of mankind, and standing in a peculiar relation to God, as his visible professing people; or as being conformed to the will and moral image of God in temper and practice. The one is called a relative, the other an inherent holiness. The first is attributed to all those who belong to

the visible church. Thus the people of Israel are all spoken of as an holy people. And, upon the same account, gospel churches are considered as consisting of saints, or holy persons. For, though it is not supposed that they are all really and inherently holy, or partakers of a divine nature, yet they are visibly the people of God, separated and devoted to him. But let it be particularly noted, that no person is ever styled holy, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, except he be of the church of God. And in the New Testament, a Saint, or Holy Person, a Disciple of Christ, a Member of the Church, and a Subject of the Kingdom of Heaven, are of the same signification. Now, since we find that the title or appellation of Holy is never given to any person in the world, except he be of the church; and since the Apostle declares, that the children of believers are holy; it is a plain and undeniable consequence, that such children are of the church, and are the proper subjects of baptism, as was to be proved.

The Antipedobaptists have endeavoured, in vain, to wring and wrest these words of the Apostle to a compliance with their tenets.—But, in the first place they would persuade us, “That the Holiness which the Apostle here intends, cannot be that which is implied in, “and connected with church membership.—For, they

“say, the same Holiness which is ascribed to the children, is also attributed to the unbelieving parent.—“If the children are Holy, the unbelieving husband and wife are also said to be sanctified.” But, I answer, the Apostle’s words plainly shew, that the unbelieving yoke-fellow is only sanctified to the believer, as all the creatures of God are said to be sanctified to the Saints, so as that they may have a holy use and enjoyment of them. He is not sanctified in respect to God, but only in respect to his wife and offspring, who derive no more defilement either by conjugal cohabitation with or by natural generation from him, than if he were a believer.—In a word, the unbelieving husband is only sanctified in that particular respect, and unto the particular purpose there pointed at, as has been said.—But the Children are declared to be not unclean, but “holy;” a title which is never given to any but those that are of the church. Unbelievers who belong not to the church may be sanctified, or prepared as instruments to answer the purposes of divine goodness to the saints. But this respective sanctification does never give them the denomination of “Holy ones.” The words of the text, and the reason of the thing therefore plainly shew, that the sanctification of the unbelieving husband or wife is a different thing from the holiness of the children.—

This gives a good, pertinent, and instructive sense to the Apostle's words, which are taken and explained in the scriptural sense, as no doubt they ought to be.

And hence we see, there is no just foundation for that objection, "That the unbelieving parent being sanctified by a believing yoke-fellow, may as well be concluded to be a member of the church and subject of baptism, as the children whose holiness depends upon this sanctification of the parents." For a person's being sanctified in some certain respect, does not give him the denomination of a holy one, in the language of the scriptures; which is a peculiar and appropriate title of those who belong to the church, and is never given to any others of the children of men. And, since the children are Holy, which is not said of the unbelieving parent, though in some respects sanctified, the children are to be acknowledged as of the church, but not the unbelieving parent.

Let us now consider how this passage is expounded by those on the other side. And here they would persuade us, "that the Apostle means, what they call, "a matrimonial holiness." And that the meaning of the text is, "The unbelieving husband is married or espoused to the wife, and the unbelieving wife married to the husband: else were your children bastards,

“but now are they legitimate.” I do not think it will be needful to say much to expose the unreasonableness of this interpretation. It is so strained and unnatural, it so sinks and spoils the sense, and is so utterly without foundation, that I think it may pass for one of the most improbable, unhandsome, and incredible glosses, that we shall readily meet with upon any text whatever. Neither the Corinthians, nor any one else doubted, or had need to be told, that the unbelieving husband had been and was married to the wife, and the unbelieving wife to the husband. For, how could they be husband and wife, if they had not been married together? And, can any one believe in sober earnest, that the inspired Apostle filled up his epistle with such a trifling ridiculous business, as telling his converts, that if they had children without being married, the children would be bastards, but now as they had been married, they were legitimate? Far be it from any Christian to burlesque the sacred scriptures at this rate.—A profane infidel, who would ridicule the Apostle, could scarce give his words a meaner, and more ludicrous turn.

THAT the infant seed of believers are members of the church, and subjects of baptism, further appears from their interest in that gracious covenant, by which the

church is constituted. To state and clear up this argument at full length, would require a large discourse. I must only give a brief sketch.

I think it is granted, that all who are visibly interested in the new covenant, are to be received as members of the visible church; and that the outward token of an interest in the covenant, and of admission into the visible church belongs to them. After the fall of man, by the breach of the first covenant, God was pleased to reveal a new and gracious covenant, of which Christ was the Mediator; which was to be the rule of intercourse and communion between God and his people, and the great charter by which the church was formed. All who were taken into this covenant were thereby separated from the rest of mankind, and brought into a peculiar relation to God, as his people and subjects, to be ruled by the special laws, and observe the special ordinances, and enjoy the special privileges of his kingdom. This kingdom of grace was to make an outward appearance upon earth, and have an outward administration in the visible church, according to the rules which God ordained. And according to these rules, all who were visibly in the covenant, were to be admitted as members of the visible church. They were to have the appointed token of the covenant put upon them, and

were visible subjects of the outward ordinances and privileges of the church. For, a visible interest in the covenant, a right of membership in the visible church, a right to the token of the covenant and of church membership, and to the outward ordinances and privileges, which, according to the covenant, belong to the church; these things are inseparably connected together, and mutually infer each other. Many, it is true, who are in the covenant visibly, and in the acceptation of the church, have not a real and saving interest in new covenant blessings. They will not at last be owned by God as his peculiar people; nor is there a spiritual, effectual, and saving application of the grace of the new covenant to them. Hence arises the common distinction between the visible and the invisible church.

Now, if this covenant, by which the church is formed and constituted, includes the children with the parents, then the token of the covenant, and of admission into the church, belongs regularly and visibly to them. This then is the point we have to prove.

Let it be remembered, in the first place, that the supposition of infants being comprehended in the covenant, and being the subjects of its outward administration in the visible church, is no ways incredible, on account of any incapacity in them. For, they are certainly capa-

ble of coming under its bonds, and having the grace of it secured and applied to them ; and they greatly need new covenant blessings. It is an important privilege to them to belong to the visible church, that they may, under its watch, instructions, and discipline, be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are also capable of having the outward token of the covenant put upon them ; which may afterwards be improved by them for their excitement and encouragement in the service of God. In short, infants are, for aught that appears, as capable subjects as any, of the obligations, the privileges, and token of the covenant ; and they stand in like need thereof with others. The presumption, therefore, is not at all against, but rather in favour of their being comprehended in the covenant, as well as others.

We may further observe, that it has always been customary for children to be included in covenants with the parents ; to come under the bonds, and receive the privileges therein stipulated. That this is common in covenants which take place among mankind, is known to all ; and no one imagines there is any thing unreasonable and improper in it, if the covenant be in itself good and reasonable. It is also certain, that when God has been pleased to covenant with mankind, the children as



well as the parents have been comprehended. This appears to have been the case in the covenant with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, and with the Israelites at Horeb. Indeed, this seems to have been the case in all God's federal transactions with the children of men. It is, therefore, altogether agreeable to the common sense of mankind, and the method of God's government of his people, that his covenant with them should respect and take in both them and their seed. And this consideration may, I think, render it quite credible and probable that the new covenant, by which the church is constituted, may be, in this respect, similar to God's covenant transactions with mankind, which, so far as appears, have constantly comprehended the children with the parents.

But, having premised these observations, I shall proceed to the direct and positive proof, that the children of God's covenant people, have also an interest in the covenant. The new covenant, which, I have said, is the great charter by which the church is formed, does most plainly and expressly take them in. It was, indeed, this new covenant I am speaking of, that was revealed to our first parents the very day that they fell, and by the proposal of it to them, they were constituted the visible church and people of God, before they were ex-

pelled from paradise.—It was again revealed to Noah after the flood, whereby he, with his children, were again recognized by God as his church and people. The same covenant was afterwards more clearly and distinctly revealed to Abraham, and the ordinance of circumcision was annexed, as an outward sign and token. And though there are sufficient intimations, that the seed of God's visible and professed people, had always, from the beginning, been considered as in the covenant, and church of God; yet as this is most expressly declared in the revelation which God made of his gracious covenant to Abraham, I shall take this more especially as the ground of the present argument.

The Abrahamic covenant, I say, was but a plainer exhibition of that same new and gracious covenant, which had been all along the foundation and charter of the church. The addition of a new ordinance, and the grant of a particular country to him and his natural posterity, made no alteration in its substantial duties, or privileges, but only pointed out a different external administration, which was to take place in the church. Hitherto the external administration of the church seems to have been domestic; the ordinances of worship being distinctly and separately administered in the several families of the Patriarch: nor do we read of solemn assem-

blies, for the purpose of attending public worship. But, as God had a design of forming a national church, of the posterity of Abraham, all the members of which were to join and have an external communion with each other in the same ordinances, and acts of worship; this different mode of administration was provided for in the grant of the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham; that so they might be formed into a political body, and live together, for their convenient attendance on holy ordinances. But this provision, was made for a different external administration in the church, is no argument but that the covenant which was revealed to Abraham was, for substance, the very same with that by which the church had at first been formed, and had all along subsisted.

This may shew how unreasonably some would insinuate, that we would make several covenants of grace. As if the same covenant could not be revealed "at sundry times, and in divers manners," and, as if there might not be a different external administration of ordinances in the church at different times, and yet the covenant by which the church is constituted remain substantially the same.

Now, that we may distinctly state this argument, grounded on the covenant with Abraham, let us take a

view of it as we have it recorded in Gen. xvii. “I am  
“the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou  
“perfect. And I will make my covenant between me  
“and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. As  
“for me, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be  
“a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name  
“any more be Abram, but thy name shall be Abra-  
“ham ; for a father of many nations have I made thee.  
“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will  
“make nations of thee, and Kings shall come out of  
“thee.—And I will establish my covenant between me  
“and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations,  
“for an everlasting covenant ; to be a God unto thee,  
“and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto  
“thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land in which  
“thou art a stranger ; all the land of Canaan for an  
“everlasting possession, and I will be their God. Thou  
“shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed  
“after thee in their generations. This is my covenant  
“which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed  
“after thee : Every man child among you shall be cir-  
“cumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your  
“foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant be-  
“twixt me and you. And he that is eight days old  
“shall be circumcised among you, every man child in

“your generations; he that is born in the house, or  
“bought with money of any stranger which is not of  
“thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that  
“is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised;  
“and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an ever-  
“lasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child  
“whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that  
“soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken  
“my covenant.”

From this memorable passage, which I have recited at large, we see that the Abrahamic covenant comprehended the children with the parents, in their successive generations; and that the outward token of an interest in the covenant was to be applied to infants. We may further observe, that all who were included in this covenant were by it constituted a visible church, separated from the rest of the world to be the people of God. That grand article of the covenant, “I will be a God  
“to thee and thy seed,” implies, that they were to stand in a peculiar relation to God, as his church; who were to be subject to peculiar laws and ordinances, by observing which, they declared on their part, That they were his People. This promise contains also the sum of new covenant blessings. The promises and ordinances did appertain only to the church; of which all who had an

interest in the covenant were members. Infants, therefore, being expressly included in the covenant, were always looked upon as of the people of God; and were to receive the distinguishing token of a covenant dedication to him.

Nor was this covenant, with its ordinances and privileges, ever limited to Abraham, and his natural posterity; and particularly that article which takes the infant seed into the church with the parents, was not any peculiar privilege of the native Hebrews: nor was circumcision appointed as the token of a peculiar interest in those temporal blessings, which were granted exclusively to the natural seed of Abraham, as some would pretend. For it appears that by the express direction of God some were to have the token of the covenant and of church membership for themselves and their children, who were neither the natural descendants of Abraham, nor were with them to inherit the land of Canaan. When circumcision was first instituted, not only Abraham, with his son Ishmael, but all the males of his family were ordered to have this token of admission into the visible church. And it was a standing rule, that bought servants, and children born in the house, should be circumcised. And the Old Testament church did receive proselytes from the Gentiles; and this token of their

interest in the covenant of Abraham was accordingly administered to them and their children; who were thereupon subjects of church ordinances and privileges. But this their interest in the covenant of Abraham gave them no right of inheritance with the native Israelites in the land of Canaan. Which I think is a clear proof, that the covenant with Abraham, to which circumcision was annexed, was not any mere national covenant, conveying peculiar temporal privileges to him and his posterity, but it could be no other than God's new and gracious covenant; by the revelation of which, those who professedly consented to it, with their children, were constituted his visible church and people, and were the regular subjects of the ordinances appertaining to its outward administration.

The Abrahamic covenant, we see, did comprehend both parents and their infant children, constituting them members of the visible church. And not only the natural children of Abraham, but many among the Gentiles, upon their becoming proselytes, professing the faith and religion of the church, they and their infant children had an interest in the covenant of Abraham, and were to be received into the visible church by the initiating rite. They were adopted into the family of Abraham, and, "the blessing of Abraham came upon

“the Gentiles,” and he was “made the father of many nations,” long before the gospel dispensation took place, and before the dissolution of the national hierarchy of the Jews, which was a middle wall of partition between them and the Gentiles. Even before this wall was taken away, there was a door left open in it, to receive all of every nation, who would join themselves to the God of Abraham, and take hold of his covenant.

The church having been constituted, according to the covenant with Abraham, it must be allowed, that during its continuance, the children are as evidently in covenant, and of the church, and subjects of the initiating ordinance, as any others. If then it shall appear, that this covenant stands now in force, and that the gospel church is in and under it, and enjoys all its privileges without any abridgement; the right of infants to church membership will stand upon the same firm basis that it did under the Old Testament.

But our opponents deny, “that baptism comes in the room of circumcision.” And if we should suppose with them, that it does not, it would be no proof but that the covenant itself may remain, though the outward token be laid aside, as it is certain that the same covenant for substance had been revealed to, and administered in the church, long before circumcision was



instituted. And if the covenant remain, infants are still fit to be church members, and consequently are the subjects of baptism. But, indeed, it is no better than wrangling, to deny that baptism comes in the room of circumcision: what we mean by the assertion is, that circumcision being abrogated under the gospel dispensation, baptism was instituted to be an outward token of an interest in the new covenant, the sacramental rite of admission into the visible church, the sign and badge of membership, even as circumcision had been to the fathers; and in a word, that it answers the like purposes in the gospel church, and is of like mystical and spiritual significancy, as circumcision was under the former dispensation. And this I should think our adversaries can scarcely deny.

Indeed, as circumcision was afterwards annexed to the Horeb covenant, and so became an ordinance of the national church, and worldly sanctuary of the Jews, binding the subjects to the observance of the whole of the Mosaic law, in this relation and respect, it must of course have ceased with the other Jewish ordinances, when that old covenant was abrogated.—And if our opponents only mean to deny, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, considered as a Mosaic ordinance, we shall not contend with them. But it should be re-

membered, that circumcision had been appointed as a token of the Abrahamic covenant, long before the Horeb covenant and national constitution of the church had a being. And I shall shew, that the Abrahamic covenant was the very same that the gospel church is now under; and that it never was annulled.

It is objected, "That the Apostle has declared, that "the covenant, which was the foundation of the Jewish "church, of which infants were members, is waxed old, "and vanished away," Heb. viii. 8, 9. I answer, The covenant which the Apostle says was ready to vanish, was that which God made with the fathers, in the day that he took them by the hand, to lead them out of Egypt; that is, the covenant at Horeb. But that covenant, which is the foundation of infant church membership, had been revealed to Abraham hundreds of years before; and the Apostle does not say, that this had waxed old, or was annulled; but the contrary. Infants were indeed members of the national hierarchy of the Jews, which is abolished. But they had been church members long before this national church was formed; nor was the foundation of their membership shaken, when that dispensation was taken away.

Let it then be considered, that the covenant of Abraham, containing a charter of privileges for the church,

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Let it then be considered, that the covenant of Abraham, containing a charter of privileges for the church,

and the right of membership for infant children, being an undoubted privilege granted in this covenant; it must be presumptuous and injurious for any to deny that this covenant stands in force, or to pretend that infants are now cut off from this right and privilege, unless they can prove, that God has taken away this covenant, or at least has cancelled that article, which is the foundation of infant church membership. But there is no intimation in the scriptures that this covenant is annulled, or that infants are cut off from their interest in it. The old covenant which the Apostle says was vanishing, was the covenant made with the Israelites, when God led them out of Egypt. But of the abolishing that covenant which constitutes infants, church members, there is nothing to be found in the whole Bible. And, till it can be proved to be abolished, it must be considered and held as valid as ever.

The Apostles are so far from teaching, that Christ has annulled God's gracious covenant with the fathers, or taken away any of the privileges therein granted to them or their children, that Paul asserts the contrary, in Rom. xv. 8, "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." These promises are summarily contained in the covenant with Abraham, that the Lord

would be a God to him and his seed ; that he should be a father of many nations ; and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. These promises are all confirmed by Christ. Abraham is the patriarch of the church. He is constituted the father of all them that believe ; of all the people of God, of every nation ; who are adopted into his family. Even the Gentiles, who were not his natural descendants, are received into the number, and entitled to the privileges of his children. He is made the father of more nations, than are derived from his blood. All the nations of the earth derive blessings from him, and hold their church privileges under him, as his children and heirs. The covenant with Abraham has, indeed, been accomplished more eminently since Christ confirmed it, than ever before. His family has been larger, and he has been made a father of more nations than ever. This article of the covenant, which receives the children with the parents into the church, is confirmed, as well as the rest. It would be most unreasonable to think otherwise, when the scriptures never hint that this article is rescinded.—And we have, besides, good evidence that the christian church has not lost this privilege, but their children are still children of the covenant, to greater advantage than ever.

The Apostle tells us again, “ That the covenant with

“ Abraham was confirmed of God in Christ, and that  
“ the law which was four hundred and thirty years  
“ after, could not disannul it,” Gal. iii. 17. And will  
any yet insinuate, that Christ has annulled this covenant,  
which God confirmed in him? This would overthrow  
the Apostle’s argument; who confutes the error of the  
Judaizing teachers about justification, by the stability of  
the Abrahamic covenant; which would be inconclusive,  
if that covenant was not in force.

Indeed, the third chapter to the Galatians, and fourth  
to the Romans are a proof, that the covenant with  
Abraham abides in force, under the gospel dispensation,  
and that the Gentile believers, with their children, have  
an interest in it which can never be evaded. The  
Apostle says, that “ They who are of faith, are the  
“ children of Abraham, and are blessed with faithful  
“ Abraham.”\* And being his adopted children, they  
are heirs. They inherit the blessings of his covenant;  
and all those privileges of church membership, which  
were granted to Abraham and his seed, belong to be-  
lievers. And as it was one covenant privilege of the  
children of Abraham, to have their infant children taken  
into the covenant and church with them: this privilege  
is transmitted by the covenant, to all who are adopted

\* Gal. iii. 7, 9.

into the family of Abraham ; otherwise they are cut off from a part of that inheritance of church privileges which was entailed upon the children of Abraham. The Apostle adds, “The blessing of Abraham is come upon “the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ.”\* Which is, as if he had said, the blessings and privileges granted in the covenant with Abraham belong and are conveyed to the Gentile church. The very same privileges without any diminution, both for them and their children. “If “ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs “according to the promise.”† Whatever privileges were by the covenant and promise of God granted to the children and heirs of Abraham, whether for themselves and their seed, the christian Gentiles are entitled to. For they are also declared to be the children and heirs of Abraham. To the same purpose the Apostle writes in the fourth chapter to the Romans, quoting those words of the covenant, “I have made thee a father “of many nations,”‡ as a proof, that Gentile believers are the children of Abraham ; and consequently are comprehended in the covenant and church, together with their offspring.

Again, in Eph. iii. 6, we read, “That the Gentiles “are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers

\* Verse 14.

† Gal. iii. 29.

‡ Rom. iv. 16. 17.



“of the promise in Christ, by the gospel.” That is, they are fellow-heirs with the Jews of the blessing and covenant of Abraham, they are admitted to that inheritance of spiritual privileges, which God’s covenant and promise conveyed to his descendants; they are of the same body the church, which was formed by this covenant; and partakers of the promise; that same promise of the covenant which had been the great privilege of the church all along, and was expressly to them and their children.

But, let us once more hear what the scripture says.—When those, who were pricked in their hearts, on the day of Pentecost, said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call,” Acts ii. 37, 38, 39. That it was the covenant with Abraham, that is here called the promise, will appear from the following considerations.—1. This covenant is commonly in the New Testament called the Promise, by way of distinction and eminency. See Rom. iv. 13, 14, “For the promise, that he should be

“heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed,  
“through the law, but through the righteousness of  
“faith. For, if they which are of the law, be heirs,  
“faith is made void, and the Promise of none effect.  
“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace;  
“to the end that the Promise might be sure to all the  
“seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that  
“also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the  
“father of us all.” Gal. iii. 17, &c. “The covenant  
“which was before confirmed of God in Christ, the law  
“which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot  
“disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.  
“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of  
“Promise, but God gave it to Abraham by Promise. If  
“ye are Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs  
“according to the Promise.” Once more. Gal. iv. 28,  
“We, as Isaac, are children of the Promise.”

In all these places, and in divers others, the covenant with Abraham is called the Promise; which shews that it was commonly so styled. 2. If we compare this text with Acts iii. 25, we shall find the promise there explained, to mean the covenant with Abraham. For the Apostle, there addressing the Jews, to persuade them to repent and be converted, in like manner as he had done on the day of Pentecost, proposes the very same encour-

agement to them in these words: “Ye are the children  
“of the covenant which God made with our fathers,  
“saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the  
“kindreds of the earth be blessed.” His telling them  
that “they were the children of Abraham’s covenant,”  
is to the same purpose exactly, as if he had told them,  
that the Promise was to them and their children. For  
this covenant was undoubtedly to the parents and their  
infant children. And their being declared children  
of the covenant, signified that they were heirs to the  
privileges of the covenant. So that these texts are  
exactly parallel, and explain each other. The same  
Apostle, preaching to the same sort of hearers (that  
is, the Jews) proposes the same argument in different  
words, even their interest in the promise, or covenant  
with Abraham, in order to enforce the same exhorta-  
tion, viz. Repentance and conversion for the remission  
of sins. So that we cannot reasonably doubt, whether  
the promise here spoken of, be not the covenant with  
Abraham, if we will allow the Apostle to explain his  
own words. 3. What the Apostle here says of the  
promise, agrees exactly in every particular, with the  
Abrahamic covenant, which had all along included the  
posterity of Abraham and their infant children, together  
with the Gentiles that were afar off, even as many of

them, as the Lord did from time to time call into his church, and who, in obedience to his call, became proselytes, or Comers, as the word properly signifies.—All who, upon the divine call, came from afar to join themselves to the Lord, and his people, were received, together with their children, into the church and covenant by circumcision; and the promise was to them and their children also, as has been observed. The covenant of Abraham did belong to all those who were in, and of the church. Peter's hearers, with their children, being actual members in the church, did not need a new call into the church, in order to their being the children of the covenant and promise. But, with the Gentiles who were afar off, and out of the church, the case was otherwise. They must first be called in, and become proselytes, before the promise would be to them and theirs. But so many as were thus called, and admitted into the family of Abraham, had an interest in the covenant and promise, as well as the Jews. Thus the case had stood all along according to the Abrahamic covenant; and thus the case stood upon the day of Pentecost, as Peter says. Which shews that it was this covenant that Peter had in his eye, when he said, "The promise "is to you and your children:" that his words are therefore to be explained according to the tenor of the Abra-

hamic covenant. That this covenant, which is the foundation of infant church membership, was not then abolished: but stood in force: and I presume no one will say it has been abolished since.

In this manner Peter's hearers must have understood his words. They had been born and bred in that church and covenant, which included both parents and children. They knew that infants had always been acknowledged as church members, ever since a church had been formed in the world. The idea of a church which should not admit the children with the parents, would have been as new and strange to them, as a church that would not admit females, would be to us. A promise, or covenant, conveying privileges to them and their children, would be naturally understood by them in the same manner as those promises in the Old Testament, which so often occur in the same form of expression, had constantly been taken; and particularly the promise to Abraham, which was the most eminent and fundamental. They would as naturally conclude that their young children are immediately respected, as we should conclude ours to be in an instrument, conveying privileges to us and our heirs; and they would have no doubt, that a grant of privileges was here asserted to the children of those who were in the covenant and church,

more than to the children of heathens. Now as the words of the Apostle would carry this meaning most naturally and obviously to the understanding of his hearers, and as the same form of expression elsewhere is constantly to be thus understood, and no reason appears why it may not be taken here in the same sense: this must in all reason be received as the true interpretation. And if this promise belonged to the infant children of the inchurched and covenanted Jews, at the day of Pentecost, none will deny that it still belongs to the children of the Gentiles, who were afar off; even as many as it pleases the Lord to call into his gospel church.

This promise Peter holds up to the Jews, as a warrant or reason why they should be baptized in the name of Christ. Repent and be baptized; for the promise is to you, &c. Now if their interest in the promise was a good reason why they should be baptized, as the Apostle asserts; then their children's having an interest in the promise with them (as is also asserted) is as good a reason for their being baptized; even as an interest in the covenant was a reason for circumcision to Abraham and his children.

This text is then a substantial proof that the covenant of Abraham stood in force, after the gospel dispensation took place: since this appears to be that very promise

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which Peter addresses to his hearers. And we see that that particular clause, which contains a grant of the privilege of church membership to the children of God's people was not taken out, when "Christ the minister of "the circumcision confirmed by his death the promises "made to the fathers." We then, and all others, whom God shall call into his church, together with our children, as the adopted children and heirs of Abraham, have an interest in the promise; are members of the gospel church; and the proper subjects of Christian baptism.

Some say, "that the Promise here spoken of, was not "the covenant with Abraham, but the promise of the "pouring out of the Spirit, in Joel." But how can this be when the Apostle says that the prophecy of Joel foretold those miraculous gifts of the Spirit, speaking with tongues, and prophesying, which appeared on the day of Pentecost? Are these gifts promised to, and conferred upon all, whom the Lord shall call? Besides, I have proved, that the promise here mentioned, was the covenant with Abraham; and till the reasons adduced are shewn to be without weight, it is folly to set up an unproved assertion in opposition to them. But whatever the promise may be supposed to be, it belonged to Peter's hearers, and their children, as he says;

and he holds it up to them as a reason for their being baptized. It must therefore be a reason for the baptism of their children also. If the gift of the Holy Ghost was promised to them, it was to their children. And they were to be considered as subjects of baptism on account of the promise; not because the gifts of the Spirit were manifest in them, but in order to their receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. For it is to be observed, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is proposed as the consequence, and not the pre-requisite of baptism. "Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

But to give this plea the greatest advantage, let us suppose that the pouring out of the Spirit in his ordinary sanctifying influences is the matter of that promise in Joel, though Peter explains it otherwise: and that this is the promise, which he, in this text proposes to his hearers, as respecting them and their children, though we have seen him explain himself otherwise. — Our argument from these words, would yet stand good. For the promise of the sanctifying Spirit being included in the blessing, we may hence infer, that they to whom this promise belongs, are interested in the covenant and blessing of Abraham, and may properly be recognized as of the church and people of God.

It is further said, "That the children to whom the promise belongs, are not infants, but adults—the posterity of the Jews." But though adults are the children of their parents, yet infants too are doubtless children. What warrant then have any to deny that they have an interest in that promise, which is to the children indefinitely, without any exception of infants?

But the evasion which is most insisted on, is, "That the promise is restrained to those only whom the Lord shall call: and infants give no evidence of their being called." But this will not bear examination. I have already shewn, that this promise was the covenant with Abraham, and is therefore to be explained according to the tenor of that covenant, which included him and his children, and so many of the Gentiles as God should from time to time call into his church. The calling of Abraham was a sufficient call to all his posterity, to give them a visible interest in the covenant, and standing in the church, till they forfeited and were cut off from this privilege. The restraining clause, therefore, only respected those who were not yet called into the church of God, and not those Jews and their children who were then actual members and children of the covenant. Repentance and baptism in the name of Christ, were required to prevent their being cut off from

the covenant and family of Abraham; but the promise was then to them and their children. There is a plain reason why the promise should respect only so many of those who are without, as the Lord should call into his church. But how absurdly would the Apostle speak, according to the interpretation which the Antipedobaptists put upon his words.—“The promise is to you and  
“your children. But neither you nor your children,  
“appear at present to have any interest in it; and no  
“one knows, that they ever will have. You are not to  
“imagine that either you or your children are entitled  
“to any privilege by it, more than belongs to every  
“man and child in the world. All that I mean is, that  
“the promise will belong to those who shall be called.  
“If this should prove to be the case with any of you,  
“or of your children, or any other person, then, and  
“not till then, the promise will be to you and them.”  
If this be all that is intended, it had been much more plainly expressed by only saying, “The promise will  
“be to those whom the Lord shall call.” To what purpose is all this flourish of words, without meaning? What end can this particular mention of them, and their children, as interested in the promise, serve, unless to persuade them, that some special privilege belonged to them, while there was nothing at all in it? It is either

insignificant or fallacious; and would convey to the understanding of the hearers either no meaning, or a false one.

Suppose it were declared, that all the privileges contained in our frame of government belonged to the native subjects and their children, and also to foreigners, even as many as the government should naturalize: and some one pretending to give the sense of this declaration should contend, that according to it, neither the native subjects, nor their children, had a right to any of these privileges, unless they should be first naturalized by an act of the government; would he not be thought ridiculously absurd? The adversaries of infant church membership are equally absurd and unreasonable, in their way of explaining the Apostle's words.

The argument from this text we have so long been considering, cannot be evaded. And we may further add, that since it is on all hands allowed to have been a great privilege of the Jewish infants, that they were in the covenant and church of God; if the infants of Christians are left out of the church, as some teach, then the gospel church is deprived of an important privilege, which the Jewish church enjoyed: and its constitution is less favourable to infants. But can we believe, that the gospel dispensation has diminished the privileges of

the church in any instance ; or that it has put any class of mankind, whether infants or adults, in a more disadvantageous state than before ; depriving them, without any fault of theirs, of their standing in the church of God, which is acknowledged to have been an important privilege ? This ought not to be supposed, unless clear and positive proof of it could be produced. But no such proof has been or can be found. Wherefore, to bring this argument to a point : the privilege of church membership has certainly been granted to the infant children of God's professing people ; which grant stands in force till it is revoked. Our opponents have often been called upon to produce an authentic act of revocation, and the demand is reasonable. This they cannot do. On the contrary, we demonstrate, that this grant has not been revoked, but is renewed, confirmed, and ratified in the gospel.

As a proper appendix to what has thus far been discoursed of the interest of infants in the visible church covenant, I shall just mention that common argument from baptism succeeding in the room of circumcision ; but shall not enlarge upon it. As infants were the subjects of circumcision, and were recognized and marked as the people of God by this rite, the conclusion is very natural and reasonable, that if baptism comes in the

place of circumcision, as the token of admission into the church, infants are the proper subjects of this ordinance ; unless God has declared to the contrary, which can never be made to appear. It is indeed denied by our opponents, that baptism does come in the place of circumcision. But I cannot find that they have explained themselves distinctly, how far, and in what respect, they mean to deny it. I own that baptism does not answer all the same purposes under the gospel dispensation that circumcision did under the Mosaic. It does not introduce the subjects into a national church, and worldly sanctuary. It has not a typical respect to the Saviour to come. It is not a yoke of bondage, obliging to the observance of the carnal ordinances of the law of Moses. And our opponents, if they will be ingenuous and reasonable, must allow that baptism does, in many respects, come in the place of circumcision. It answers similar ends in the gospel church ; and is of the same general signification ; and is to be applied to the same subjects ; and has even the same name given to it ; and upon the institution of baptism, as an ordinance, of standing and universal obligation, circumcision was no longer the token of admission into the visible church, as it had been before. And this is all we mean, when we assert, that baptism succeeds to circumcision.

As circumcision was the outward token of the covenant, and of admission into the church ; so baptism is the outward token of church membership, and of an interest in the new covenant ; which I have proved, is substantially the same with that of Abraham, to which circumcision was annexed. They are both the appointed outward sign and badge of the people of God. As circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham, so is baptism to Christians.

Again, circumcision and baptism though different in external rites, are alike in their spiritual signification. They both pointed out our native corruption, and need of purification, by an inward and spiritual renovation. They both signified cleansing from the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood of Christ, an admission into the church, a dedication to God, an obligation to walk in his commandments and ordinances, and a right to covenant privileges.

It is further to be observed, that the Apostle calls Christians the Circumcision, under the gospel ; which was the common appellation of those who had, under the former dispensation, received the token of induction into the church. A sufficient intimation that the one takes the place of the other.

Accordingly, circumcision ceased to be longer the



token of church membership, after Christ sent out his Apostles to preach and baptize in his name, when baptism was made the standing rite of admission into the gospel church.

For these reasons, we cannot but consider baptism as taking that place in the gospel œconomy, in which circumcision stood under the old dispensation ; though we readily allow that each of these ordinances had some peculiar ends and significations, suited to the different states of the church, in which they were respectively in force ; in respect of which peculiarities, they may not properly be parallel. And hence we argue, that since circumcision and baptism are manifestly similar in their main ends, uses, and significancies ; infants are as proper subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision ; and that the divine order for administering the one ordinance to them, warrants our administering that other ordinance that comes in its room. And the argument is not only popular, but of real weight ; though I do not lay the greatest stress upon it.

It is objected, “That the outward rites are very “unlike.” But I can see no weight in this. The different states of the church under the Old and New Testament might require this difference of outward administration respecting the initiating rite.

It is further objected, “ That the subjects of baptism “and circumcision were different. Circumcision was “to be administered only to males, baptism to both “sexes.” I answer, The circumcision of the males was the appointed token of church membership to the people of God of both sexes. The females were accounted of the circumcision; and were admitted to the holy ordinances which were interdicted to the uncircumcised and unclean.

It is objected again, “ That baptism was in use and “force before circumcision was abolished.” I answer, Though baptism was administered by John, and the disciples of Christ, a short time before circumcision was abolished, yet this no more proves that the former succeeds not in the room of the latter, than Solomon’s reigning with his father a short time, is a proof that he did not succeed and reign in his stead. But though baptism was in use before, it was not fully established as the rite of induction into the church, till the mission of the Apostles; after which, circumcision was no longer required for that purpose, as it had been before; though for other reasons it continued in use among the believing Jews some years longer.

It is further inquired, “ What need there was that “those who had been circumcised should be baptized,

“if they are both ordinances of the same use and significance?” I answer, It was the will of Christ, that all his disciples should receive the new token and badge of church membership, although they had been admitted members of the Old Testament church. And such as would not recognize themselves as his disciples, were to be rejected, and unchurched, and be as branches broken off by their unbelief. Their circumcision became uncircumcision, and the token of their being the people of God became null and void.

To these scriptural arguments in favour of infant church membership, I shall add another consideration, which seems to me to have great weight.

The Jews certainly knew that their infants had an interest in the covenant of Abraham, and had always been acknowledged, received, and recognized by circumcision, as being of the church and people of God. If the Apostles had taught that infants were no longer to have an interest in God’s covenant, or be members of the church, or receive any token of their being the people of God; the doctrine must have been new, strange, very shocking and offensive to the Jews. They must certainly have taken notice of it, and been greatly displeased at it. They opposed the Apostles with all their might, and did all in their power to render them

odious, and set the people against them and their new doctrine. They were ready to take offence, and wanted neither wit nor will to lay hold of and exaggerate a plausible and popular objection. Such an objection they would have had, if the Apostles had denied that their children were to be church members any longer. They would not have borne such a doctrine, which declared all their children excommunicated and cut off from the church and people of the Lord, and to have no part in him; but would certainly have urged the objection with a vehemence. And the Apostles must have seen, that it highly concerned them to answer the objection, and take up so dangerous a stumbling block, if their doctrine had given so obvious and fair a handle to their enemies against them. But we have no hint in the New Testament, or any author, Jewish, Christian, or Heathen, that ever I could find or learn, that the Jews ever made any such objection to the Apostles, or their doctrine; or that the Apostles ever attempted either to obviate or silence it, or said one word about it: which is certainly a most violent presumption, and may almost pass for plenary evidence, that the Apostles did not, by denying the right of church membership of infants, furnish an obnoxious occasion and ground for any such objection.

I shall mention but one argument more, grounded upon the History of Infant Baptism, and the practice of the church from the apostolic age, according to the testimony of the earliest writers. The fact, in short, is found to stand thus: 1. That the validity and lawfulness of infant baptism appears not to have ever been denied by any Christians till about the year 1130; and then only by one Peter de Bruis in France, with his followers, a small sect, which held withal, that no infants were saved, and divers other gross errors, as historians report. It soon dwindled to nothing. After which, there cannot be found a single instance, well vouched, of a person opposing infant baptism (except such as denied water baptism) till the Anabaptists sprang up in Germany about 250 years ago. To this purpose we have the testimony of Doctor Wall, a learned, diligent and faithful writer on the subject, in his History of Infant Baptism. These are his words, “For the first 400 years  
“there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised  
“the delay of infant baptism in some cases, and one  
“Gregory that did perhaps practise such delay in the  
“case of his children; but no society so thinking, or so  
“practising, nor any one man saying that it was unlawful to baptize infants. In the next 700 years, there is  
“not so much as one man to be found, that either spoke

“for, or practised such delay, but all the contrary.  
“And when about the year 1130, one sect among the  
“Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants,  
“as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that  
“people rejected their opinion; and they of them that  
“held that opinion, quickly dwindled away, and dis-  
“appeared; there being no more heard of holding that  
“tenet, till the rising of the German Antipedobaptists,  
“in the year 1522.” Thus far Dr. Wall. To this  
our opponents have hitherto found nothing to oppose,  
worthy of credit, except some testimonies to the prac-  
tice of baptizing adults; which are nothing to the pur-  
pose; since no one doubts that unbaptized adults, as  
well as infants, are the subjects of baptism. Or if any  
have been found speaking against the baptism of infants,  
they have appeared to be such as were against all water  
baptism.

2. On the other hand, we have the express testimony  
of the learned Christian writers, who lived within one,  
two, and three hundred years of the Apostles, that infant  
baptism was not only then commonly practised in the  
church, but had been received and practised from the  
Apostles; and that none were known of, among all the  
numerous sects of Christians, pretending to deny it.

The testimonies of the fathers to this purpose, are

commonly known by those who are moderately versed in this controversy. Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the Apostles, mentions expressly some aged Christians, who were made disciples in, or from their infancy. And though he mentions not their infant baptism, his words fairly imply it. For if they were made disciples in infancy, they were doubtless the subjects of baptism. Irenæus, who is said to have been born in the apostolic age, mentions the baptism of infants. He calls it, indeed, their regeneration ;—but so baptism was commonly termed by the ancient fathers, as all who are versed in their writings know and acknowledge. Tertullian, who lived within 100 years of the Apostles, speaks of the baptizing of infants as a practice of the church ; but advises to the delay of it, except in cases of necessity ; though he has nothing to say against the validity and lawfulness of it. He advises also the delay of baptism to adults, till they are married, or confirmed in continency. Though he was singular and whimsical in his opinion, yet he may well be admitted as a credible witness that infant baptism was a common practice in the church at that time. And this is all the use we mean to make of any of the testimonies we shall produce.

Origen, who also lived within 100 years after the Apostles, and was one of the most learned and knowing

men of the age, declares, that infants are, by the usage of the church, baptized. And that an order for the baptizing infants, had been delivered to the church, from the Apostles, who knew that the pollution of sin is in all.

Cyprian, who lived but little more than 100 years after the Apostles, gives as full a testimony as possible to the practice of infant baptism at the time he lived. At a council of 66 ministers, held about 150 years after the Apostles, it was debated, whether it would not be proper to delay the baptizing of infants, till the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision. [Note, it appears they considered baptism as coming in the room of circumcision.] They were unanimously of opinion, that there was no reason for any such delay.

WE are now to consider the objections.

And the first is, “that there is no command in scripture for baptizing infants, nor can it be proved, that the Apostles baptized any such. We have express accounts of the baptism of men and women; but that infants were, or ought to be admitted as subjects of this ordinance, the scripture saith not. How can this be a divine ordinance, when there is neither precept nor precedent for it?”



I answer, If it any way appears from the scripture, that infants are subjects of baptism, it matters not whether this doctrine be grounded on an express precept or example, or whether it be taught in some other way. Is it not presumption for us to say, that we will not believe this to be the mind of Christ, unless he has revealed it in the particular way that we may pitch upon? The question should be, whether we can find, or gather from the scriptures any sufficient evidence, that infants are to be baptized. If the reasons on which our doctrine and practice is grounded, be good and conclusive, we ought to acquiesce in them. It never can be proved, either by scripture or reason, that consequential evidence is insufficient to determine our judgment and practice, in matters of religion; or that every part of God's revealed will is delivered in express propositions.

Since the scriptures plainly acknowledge and assert the right of membership of infants in the gospel church, that they are of the number of Christ's disciples, that they are holy, and have an interest in God's gracious covenant; and since it is owned by all, that, according to the order and rule of the gospel, all those who are disciples, holy, and in the covenant, are the proper subjects of baptism: the consequence is clear, that infants are to be baptized. And this is equivalent

to an express order for it. It is as plain and valid a warrant, though it be consequential, as an express order would be.

We have also such precedents in favour of our practice, as, though they may be caviled at, must, I think, be of great weight with every unbiased man ; precedents which seem to render it morally certain, that infant baptism was practised by the Apostles. Three whole families we read of, who were baptized. If there were any children under the age of discretion, in any of these families, they were certainly admitted. Now, though it be not said whether there were any such children, yet it can scarce be doubted that there were, when the following circumstances are well considered. 1. If we should take three families among us, promiscuously, I suppose the probability would be, at least, fifty to one, that there would be young children in some of them. 2. It is not said, or intimated, that there were no such children in these families. But if it had been the case that there were no children in these houses, and if children ought not to be baptized, there was great reason and necessity that so important and uncommon a circumstance should be mentioned, to prevent a dangerous mistake, which these accounts, left as they stand, would naturally lead men into. For the baptism of these families would

naturally be considered as precedents for baptizing other families, in which there were infants. And as the constant and known practice of the church for thousands of years, and the declarations of Christ and his Apostles, were in favour of infant church membership; how reasonable must it needs appear to practise household baptism, unless it were plainly testified and guarded against? In short, we have express precedents, or examples, if not of infant baptism, yet of household baptism, infants not excepted; and that too upon the faith or profession of the head of the family. For it is to be carefully noted, that in these accounts it is not said, or intimated, that all in these families were baptized on a personal profession of faith; but only, that the head of the family believed, and thereupon was baptized with all the house. And upon the authority of these precedents of family baptism, in conjunction with the other grounds which have been mentioned, we assert and claim the right of household baptism, on behalf of the families of believers, infants not excepted. And we challenge those who will not admit them, to produce an authentic order or precedent for this their refusal.

As the gospel, though it has changed the initiating sacrament, continues infants in the same standing in the church, which it was well known they had had all

along ; it is nothing strange that we have not more express orders and precedents touching infant baptism. What need of new precepts and examples to ascertain a point, which had in effect been long since settled ; which all understood, and all agreed in ? But how infinitely strange would it be, if infants, who had from the beginning been of the church, by the appointment of God, and the subjects of the initiating ordinance, should be cast out of the church, and cut off from the people of God, without any order or precedent for it in scripture ? And yet this we must believe, if we deny their right to church membership and baptism. For certainly there is neither order nor precedent for excluding them from the church, or from the initiating rite.

If the Apostles had refused to admit infants into the gospel church by baptism, we should, without all peradventure, have had a plain order not to receive them. The case was such as must, in all reason, have required it. Such a great and important change in the constitution of the church, as would cut off a great part of those who had always been acknowledged to be in the church and covenant of God, must have seemed strange to the Jewish converts ; who would naturally have expected that their children were still to be received with them, as heretofore ; and would, accordingly, have

moved to have them baptized; as the ancient Jewish writers attest was commonly practised at the admission of proselytes. At least, they would have inquired, whether the gospel church admitted infants as well as adult believers; which must have given occasion for a plain and express determination of the point, if so great and striking an innovation was to be established. And it would be of great necessity that such a decree should be promulgated and recorded, as a standing rule or canon, to be observed by all the churches. But nothing like this appears in any writings, sacred or profane. We may therefore retort the argument upon our adversaries thus: since infants had always been received as church members, by the initiating rite, they who refuse still to receive them, ought to be able to produce plain orders or precedents for this their refusal: which since they cannot do, we conclude that the right of church membership still belongs to them, and that they are subjects of baptism.

There was not that occasion for an express mention of the baptism of infants, as of women; for as women had hitherto been admitted to the privileges of church membership, without being circumcised, it might well be doubted, whether baptism, the sacrament of admission into the gospel church, was to be administered to fe-

males. To remove this scruple, we have express precedents of female baptism; shewing that persons of either sex are alike proper subjects of this ordinance. But there was no room to doubt, whether the token of church membership were to be applied to infants; nor had it ever been called in question.—And yet the New Testament furnishes clear proofs that they are members of the gospel church; and express precedents of household baptism, without exception of infants; as has been shown; nor is there any thing of weight to be urged against it.

If, after all that has been said, the want of more express orders or precedents for infant baptism stick as a scruple in the minds of any, let the following considerations be added to what has been said. 1. Is it not as strange, and more so, that we have but one express example of infant circumcision, in all the Old Testament, and not one among the Israelites? And yet, no doubt, it was practised every day. Is it not strange, that there is neither express precept nor example, in the New Testament of women's coming to the Lord's supper? And yet, no doubt, they did so commonly. Jesus, it seems, baptized more disciples than John, John iv. 1. Is it not strange that none of the writers of the New Testament, except John, give the least hint that he baptized at all, though John's baptizing is often mentioned by almost

all of them? These instances may shew, how little such a negative argument is to be depended on in the present case. 2. Is it not a manifest sign of prejudice, and an unfair mind, to think there is no sufficient warrant for infant baptism, unless there be express orders or precedents for it; and yet refuse to receive infants into the church, though there be neither precept nor precedent to warrant or justify our refusing them that privilege, with which they were invested by God, and held it without dispute thousands of years? Is not this to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel? 3. Does it become us to disregard, and refuse to admit such evidence as must be acknowledged to be of weight, and stand caviling, that the case might have been made plainer? I grant it might, if God had pleased. And so might many other truths, which yet we have sufficient reason to believe. Our opponents must own, that if infant baptism be contrary to the mind of Christ, this would have been much plainer, had there been an express order against it; and much dispute and trouble would have been prevented. The case is left just as plain as Christ has thought fit it should be. And it belongs not to us to object, that the evidence is not such as we should like best; but to inquire seriously, humbly, and prayerfully, what is truth; and thankfully to close with it, upon

any good evidence of it that we can find. 4. Let me ask the objector, What he would have? What proof would satisfy him? Would it give satisfaction, if the order had run thus: "Go teach all nations, baptizing "them, and their children?" You could as easily and fairly evade this, as you do the express proofs we bring of infant church membership. Christ says expressly, that the kingdom of heaven is, or consists of little children; and it is not denied, that the kingdom of heaven is the church; yet we are told, that these little children, which are of the church, are not infants, but adults, resembling little children in humility. The Apostle says expressly, that the children of believers are Holy. A character never once given in scripture to any but church members: yet this avails nothing. A new sense, unknown in the scriptures, is invented, and put upon the word, though it makes nonsense of the text. We bring express scripture to prove, that the promise is to the children as well as the parents; that believers are accounted the children and heirs of Abraham, according to the promise; and that his blessing is come upon the Gentiles: and the right of church membership for his natural posterity, was certainly one article of this blessing. Yet our opponents go on against all this evidence, upon no better foundation than their own arbi-



trary conjectures and hypothesis. While men are in this humour, what confidence can we have, that, if there had been an express order for infant baptism, they would not set their inventions to work to explain it away? And we might be told, that the children to be baptized are such as are capable of professing faith; or that they are such as resemble infants in humility; or that they are spiritual children, who imitate the faith of the first converts; or that they are to be baptized after they have been first taught, and have given evidence of their effectual calling, &c. In short, a fair and honest mind will embrace the truth upon any sufficient proof, whether direct or consequential. But when the integrity of the mind is corrupted and distorted, by prejudices, and fondness for particular schemes, the light that is in men becomes darkness; and ways will be found to ward off conviction, for the most part, by any arguments whatever. I have considered this objection the more largely, because, though it has really no weight in it, yet it is apt enough to amuse and puzzle weak and simple minds, and to breed scruples, which sometimes prove very troublesome and hurtful.

It is said by some, “That it is not being in the covenant, or church, that gives a right to baptism; but a “divine order to that purpose.”

But to what purpose is this said, except to raise a dust, and keep up a fruitless altercation? You acknowledge that it is according to the order and rule of the gospel, that all those be received as the subjects of baptism, who have visibly an interest in the covenant and appear to be such as are to be received into the gospel church. Whether, therefore, their being visibly in covenant or of the church gives them the right to baptism or not; yet, by your own acknowledgment it proves, or evidences an unquestionable right thereto. The allegation in the objection is, indeed, most unreasonable: but if we should admit it, for argument sake, the right of church membership of infants being proved, their right to baptism is undeniable, as long as it is allowed that all such are the proper subjects of baptism.

Another principal objection is, that “according to “the gospel order, faith and repentance, or at least a “credible profession thereof, are required of all previously or in order to their being baptized. The Apostles were first to teach those whom they baptized, “Matt. xxviii. 19. Christ puts believing before baptism, when he says, He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,” Mark xvi. 16. And Peter “says to the Jews, who being pricked in their hearts, “asked, what they should do; “Repent and be bap-

“tized,” Acts ii. 38. And when the eunuch moved, “that he might be baptized, Philip said to him, “If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest,” Acts viii. 37. We read also of several, who, agreeably to this rule, were baptized, professing their faith and repentance. If repentance and faith are the necessary conditions of baptism, infants cannot be admitted: for they make no profession, and give no evidence of these qualifications.”

Answer. To shew that this objection is without any weight, we need only open our Bibles, and read the several texts that are brought to support it. Let us take them in their order.

The first is Matt. xxviii. 19. I have before observed, that the proper significance of the Greek is, “Go make all nations disciples (or proselytes) baptizing them—teaching them,” &c. as our opponents grant: and this is a good warrant for the baptism of infants, as well as the parents; and they are therefore to be admitted by the same outward rite. And to say that infants can no otherwise become disciples than by being taught, is no better than a mean begging of the very point to be proved. Whenever the Apostles made a disciple of the parent, the right and privilege of disciples was given to the children; who were as such to be baptized, together

with the parents, according to the Apostles' orders, to disciple and baptize all nations.

And if we should understand the word here used as signifying to instruct or indoctrinate, there would be no reason for any one to conclude, that infants may not be baptized till they are first taught.—No such thing is said, or in the least implied. Christ's disciples are indeed to be taught, as well as baptized; children as well as adults; as far, and as soon as they are capable of it. But that they may not be baptized till after they have been first taught, there is not one word, nor iota in the whole paragraph. And to argue from the bare order of the words, that indoctrination is a necessary pre-requisite to baptism in all cases, is to build upon quick-sand indeed. For it is well known, that things are often mentioned in scripture, in a promiscuous or inverted order.—Nay, if the order of the words were any solid foundation to argue upon, we might, in this way, prove that it was the will of Christ, that the Apostles should make disciples, by first baptizing them, and then teaching them. For the instructions Christ gave them when he sent them forth, stand in this order; “Go disciple  
“all nations, baptizing them—teaching them,” &c. But we lay no stress at all upon such precarious arguments. The truth is, some are to be taught before, and

in order to their being baptized. Others are by baptism to be introduced into the school of Christ, and put under the discipline of the church before, and in order to their being taught. Adults we grant, are to be first taught, and to make a profession of faith, in order to their being baptized; and that for two reasons. 1. They are immediately capable of it. 2. They have no visible right or meetness to be received as members of the church of Christ, till they profess their faith in him. And we may add, that it is not the will of Christ that any such should be taken into his school, without their free consent. On the contrary, there are two reasons why infants should by baptism be received into the church, without their being first taught, and professing their faith. 1. They are not at present capable of it. 2. Their church membership and right to baptism is manifested without it from the scriptures; as has been shewn. And it is the will of Christ, that they be entered into his school immediately, previous to their actual consent. A profession of faith, does not more evidence the right of a believer to baptism, than his infant child's right to the same is evidenced by the scriptures, which declare that, "of such is the kingdom of heaven, that the promise is to them, and that they are holy."

This text then contains nothing against infant baptism, and I have elsewhere shewn, that it furnishes a good argument in favour of it. The next passage we have to consider is Mark xvi. 15, 16, “Preach the “gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is “baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not “shall be damned.” If this text does not contain so much in favour of infant baptism as the other, yet certainly there is nothing against it. It is true faith and baptism are here required in order to salvation. But whether in order to salvation, faith be required before baptism in all cases, or in any case, is not said; nor can it be proved from this text; which only contains a promise of salvation to those who believe and are baptized. And I presume it will be allowed, that if any one should first be baptized, and afterwards should believe; this promise would belong to him, as really as if he had first believed, and then was baptized.—If any one should be baptized upon a hypocritical confession of faith, and afterwards should become a true believer, he would no doubt be saved; nor would it be required of him that he be again baptized. And though we grant that a profession of faith is required of an unbaptized adult, in order to his being baptized; yet it is an abuse of scripture, to argue that infants are not to be baptized till they believe, because be-

believing is mentioned before baptism in this place, which, by the acknowledgment of our opponents, "Speaks only of those who are capable of attending to the preaching of the gospel, and of actual believing." They do not apply to infants the damnatory sentence against unbelievers; and it is equally unreasonable, to urge their want of faith, as an objection to their being admitted to baptism.—In short, I can find nothing in these words, that makes the least difficulty in the matter; unless we will be so ridiculously absurd as to imagine, that infants and adult believers cannot both be the subjects of baptism; or that the mention of the one alone, implies the denial of the other.

In Acts ii. 38, Peter exhorts his hearers to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Those whom he thus exhorts are all adults. For no one preaches to young infants. It is also observable in these words that they were only required to repent in order to be baptized; which is contrary to the opinion of those who renounce infant baptism. They say we must believe as well as repent. We grant that repentance is required of unbaptized adults, in order to their being baptized. But does he so much as hint, that infants are not to be admitted? No. But in the next words asserts, that the same promise which belonged to them, and which he

holds up as a warrant and encouragement to them, to repent and be baptized, did also belong to their children. But these words have been before considered.

The same remark is to be made on the words of Philip to the Eunuch, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized.” Any Pedobaptist, must, upon his own principles, have said the same, upon the like occasion.

The examples of those who were baptized upon a profession of faith, are sometimes brought as an objection against infant baptism. These, we grant, are a proof that believers are the subjects of baptism. We grant further, that they are no proof that infants are subjects. But it is strange it should ever be thought that these examples make any thing against the baptism of infants. Cannot adult believers be admitted, unless infants be rejected? Is there not room enough in the church for both? A thousand instances of one sort, are no argument against the admission of the other. The truth is, we have not many certain instances of adult baptism mentioned particularly in the New Testament. Several of these were persons of note, who had no children. Of others, it appears, that if there were children in their families, as is highly probable, they were baptized with them. And some that are confidently supposed to have



been adults, might a great part of them have been infants, for any thing that appears to the contrary; particularly the three thousand added to the church on the day of Pentecost. But among all those, who are said to have been baptized upon a profession of faith, it is remarkable that we find not one that was born of Christian parents, or was, on our principles, a fit subject of baptism in infancy. We have, in the New Testament, the history of the church for thirty years after Christ's ascension, in all which there is not one instance that in the least countenances their practice, who are against the baptism of the children of believers, till they are of age to profess their faith. Wherein they differ from us, they have most certainly neither precept nor example in scripture to support them.

Upon the whole, this objection, which has often been held up with so much parade, is like a vapour; which, beheld at a distance, may look as if there might be something in it; but upon a nearer view, is found to be as light and unsubstantial as the air, while we endeavour to handle it, we can find nothing in it.

It is objected by some, that "Christ was baptized in adult age; and we ought herein to follow his example."

Answer. John's baptism, with which Christ was bap-

tized, was not instituted till Christ was of adult age. How could it be expected that he should have the ordinance administered to him, before it was a divine ordinance? We might as well argue against infant circumcision, because Abraham was circumcised in adult age. But Christ in his infancy was dedicated to God, and received into the number of his people, according to the ordinances then in use: which may serve as a precedent and pattern to Christians to dedicate their children to God in baptism, the rite of induction to the Christian Church. Christ's baptism was the token of his solemn consecration to his public ministry; signifying his anointing with the Holy Ghost to the offices of prophet, priest, and king (and especially as the high priest of his church) which he was to execute, and was accordingly inaugurated at his entering on the public discharge of these his offices, when he was about thirty years of age. There were many peculiar circumstances attending Christ's baptism, which are not imitable by us.

As many people have mistaken the nature and end of Christ's baptism, and have therefore thought it their duty to follow him by being baptized in adult age, for their sake, I shall also make the following remarks.

1. The baptism with which Christ was baptized was not the Christian baptism, as it plainly appears from

Acts xix. 3, 4, 5. There we find the Apostles baptized some persons over again, who had been baptized by John; which they never would have done, if John's baptism had been that of the Christian dispensation.

2. We must observe, when Christ was baptized, he was just then about to enter into his priestly and ministerial office, as the great high priest of his church; and as such he was typified by Aaron and his successors. Now God had positively commanded that Aaron should be admitted into his office by washing or baptism, see Exod. xxix. 4, &c. We also find that this was accordingly done, see Levit. vii. 6. Therefore when our blessed Lord was about to take this office upon him, he went to John to be baptized; and though John was sensible that he had more need to be baptized of Christ, and therefore seemed to draw back from the duty; yet Christ said (in allusion, no doubt, to the command for initiating the high priest by washing or baptism) "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," all that was typical of me as the high priest of the church. And "then he suffered him," Matt. iii. 13, 14, 15. It is also very remarkable that Jesus Christ at that time, was about thirty years of age, under which the priests were not to enter on their office. Compare Levit. iv. 3 and Matt. iii. 23.

It is objected, “That infant baptism is a part of “popery, the basis of national churches, and worldly “establishments; that it unites the church and world, “and keeps them together.”

Answer. Infant baptism is grounded on the scriptures; and is commonly practised in those churches that are not, nor ever were subject to the Pope; therefore, it is not a part of Popery though practised as divers other ordinances are, in the Roman church.

Infant baptism is not the basis of national churches, and worldly establishments. Infants were church members long before there was a national church in the world; which was not till the Horeb covenant. That particular constitution of a church, and form of administration, whereby it becomes national, has no connection with, or dependence upon infant baptism. A national church may as well be formed upon the principle of Antipedobaptism as any other. If the church of England should renounce infant baptism, and yet remain in present constitution in other respects, it would still be, and might as well continue, a national church as ever. There may be a national church, though not one half of the nation are of it. And there would be no national church, though all the individuals of the nation were members of congregational churches. And as for

worldly establishments of religion, it is too plain to need insisting on, that infant baptism no way affects them. Infant baptism stands as well without, as with human establishments; and human establishments can stand as well without, as with infant baptism.

Infant baptism does not unite the church and the world, and keep them together. If by the world we mean those that are not of the visible church; how can the baptizing of infants of church members unite the church with those that do not belong to it? If by the world be meant professed Christians, who are manifestly unmeet and unworthy of Christian communion, infant baptism neither unites the church, nor keeps it united with any such. It is owing to the neglect or abuse of discipline, when such remain united with the church. Or if any should mean by the world, visible Christians, who are secretly hypocritical; it is not the will of Christ that the church should be separated from these, till their hypocrisy becomes manifest. Nor would the abolishing of infant baptism make such a separation.

It is objected, "That the answer of a good conscience "is required in baptism, in order to its being of saving "advantage, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And as infants are incapable of this, they are not subjects of baptism." I answer, Though the answer or engagement of a good

conscience must be joined with the outward washing with water, when the subject is capable of it, yet this makes nothing against infant baptism. For if the answer of a good conscience be afterwards annexed to the sacramental washing received in infancy, such a baptism is as valid, and as available to salvation, as if the washing with water, and the answer of a good conscience, had been at the same time. And infants are by their baptism bound to the answer of a good conscience; which they are to recognize and perform, when they are capable of it. Indeed this passage speaks plainly in our favour. For the Apostle compares baptism to the ark of Noah, as being the figure or antitype of it, bearing a resemblance to it. Noah by faith prepared the ark, for the saving of himself and his house. As his children were received with him into the ark, so the children of believers have a right to the church, and are the subjects of baptism, together with their parents; which bears in this respect, the figure and resemblance of the ark.

It is also objected, that, “if infants are to be members of the church, and subjects of baptism, they ought also to be admitted to partake of the Lord’s supper, which is an ordinance to which all the members of the Christians church have a right. And accordingly it was customary with the ancient Christians

“ who practised infant baptism, to administer the Lord’s  
“ supper also to them. And they who disapprove the  
“ communicating of infants, should, if they would be  
“ consistent, disallow the baptizing of them.”

Answer. We grant that infants, as church members, have an external right to all the ordinances of the visible church, as far, and soon as they are actually capable of, and meet for them. As they are immediately capable and meet subjects of baptism, they are to be admitted thereto without delay. As soon as they are capable of receiving instruction from the word, they should be brought to give their attendance to it; and when they can so far understand the nature and design of the Lord’s supper, and have such a measure of knowledge and faith, that they can discern the Lord’s body, and examine themselves, and so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; it is not only their right, but their duty, to do so, without delay. Though an infant may have a right to an estate, of which he is an heir, yet he is not admitted to possess, occupy, and improve it, till he is of capacity for it. And such is the nature and design of the Lord’s supper, that a right attendance on it, requires an actual capacity and present meetness for it; which infants have not. And it is this want and capacity of meetness, and not a want of right to church privileges, that is the

reason why we do not admit them. But this reason does not exclude them from baptism; of which they are as capable and meet subjects now, as they were of circumcision formerly. They are capable of the sign, and the thing signified; of coming under the obligations, and having the grace and privileges of the covenant secured and conveyed to them; of being solemnly dedicated to God; recognized and admitted, as his visible church and people. These things they are capable of in infancy. And to signify and effect these, is the design and use of baptism, as has been observed.

It appears, I trust, that our opponents have no reason to say, as they are wont to do with great confidence, that there is nothing in the scriptures in favour of infant baptism, but they plainly declare against it. We have searched the scriptures, and find nothing at all contrary to infant baptism; and plain proofs that infants are the subjects of baptism. Whether this does not amount to a fair and full proof, let every one who has the reason of a man consider and judge.

We learn also, the error of rebaptizing those, who have been baptized in their infancy. This practice cannot be justified either by precept or example, or any good reasons. Infant baptism administered by sprinkling, we have examined by the scriptures, and find it to be well



warranted. To renounce it therefore, and be baptized over again, is utterly wrong. And though we charitably believe that those who have gone into this practice, have done it conscientiously, yet their consciences were therein misguided, and they have entangled themselves by the wrong step they have taken, and given Satan an advantage against them. Having openly renounced communion with all Christians, but those of their own party, they too often appear to be exceedingly hardened against all means that can be used for convincing them of their error; and take it with great scorn and impatience, to have it suggested to them that perhaps they are in a mistake. And if any such suspicions should ever arise in their minds, yet what a strong temptation will they have to wink hard against the light, when it begins to enter into their minds, and to discover to them, what they cannot bear the thoughts of, that in the height of their confidence they have been wrong. It is very unhappy when Christians run themselves into such sad entanglements, and get their scruples and prejudices fixed and riveted.

# AGAINST ANTINOMIANISM



## AGAINST ANTINOMIANISM.

*Quest.* 1. **W**H A T can be done to guard against Antinomianism?

*Answ.* 1. Let all the Preachers carefully read over Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Fletcher's tracts. 2. Let them frequently and explicitly preach the truth, but not in a controversial way. And let them take care to do it in love and gentleness: Not in bitterness, returning railing for railing. 3. Answer all the objections of our people as occasion offers: But take care to do it in a Christian temper.

*Quest.* 2. Wherein lies our danger of it?

*Answ.* 1. With regard to man's *faithfulness*, our Lord himself hath taught us to use the expression; therefore we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert upon his authority, that if a man is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.

2. With regard to working for life, which our Lord expressly commands us to do. Labour, (*ἐργάζεσθαι*) literally, *work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.*

And in fact every believer till he comes to glory, works for, as well as from life.

3. We have received it as a maxim, that "A man is to do nothing in order to justification:" Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should cease from evil, and learn to do well. So God himself teacheth by the prophet Isaiah. Whoever repents, should do works meet for repentance: And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

Once more review the whole affair.

1. Who of us is *now* accepted of God?

He that *now* believes in Christ with a loving, obedient heart.

2. But who among those that never heard of Christ?

He that according to the light he has, feareth God and worketh righteousness.

3. Is this the same with, He that is sincere?

Nearly, if not quite.

4. Is not this salvation by works?

Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition.

5. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions, is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those who by their own confession neither

feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this any exception to the general rule?

It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God, and work righteousness?

His own thinking so, is no proof. For we know how all that are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect.

6. Does not talking without proper caution of a justified or sanctified state, tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing God, according to our works; according to the whole of our present inward tempers, and outward behaviour.

